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PAINTING IN FRANCE

BY PHILIP GILBERT HAMERTON

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Ethel Potter -

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THE FLOWER.

Aubert

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PAINTING IN FRANCE

AFTER THE DECLINE OF CLASSICISM

An Essay

BY

PHILIP GILBERT HAMERTON

AUTHOR OF "CONTEMPORARY FRENCH PAINTERS," "THE GRAPHIC ARTS," "A PAINTER'S CAMP," "PARIS," "ETCHING AND ETCHERS," ETC.

With Fourteen Photographic Illustrations

REPRODUCED IN PHOTOGRAVURE

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À

CHARLES PHILIBERT MARILLER.

Dans toutes nos bonnes et longues causeries nous avons parlé votre langue, et il ne me semblerait pas naturel de vous dédier ce livre en la mienne. Pendant les années laborieuses et solitaires que j'ai passées en province, j'aurais été complètement isolé du monde artistique sans votre voisinage et votre amitié. Maintenant que votre atelier est fermé, et que vous êtes loin de nous, je sens combien j'ai perdu, et je vous offre ce volume en souvenir de relations qui ont été pour moi aussi charmantes que profitables, et que je voudrais pouvoir renouveler.

Pré Charmoy, Autun,
1er Juillet, 1868.

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PREFACE.

THE Classical discipline, having been vigorously resisted by Romanticism, was no longer able to maintain its authority; and various other forms of art arose independently of it. Of these the most militant and aggressive has been Realism; and the most popular has been that kind of art to which contemporary French criticism has assigned the barbarous neologism, "*Modernité.*" In very many respects the history of art resembles the history of religion. When a discipline is universally accepted, or has a sufficient number of adherents to prevent the expression of other opinions, it acquires in the course of time such an appearance of permanence as to seem fixed and rooted in the very nature of things. But a time always arrives when the discipline is weakened from within; and not long afterwards some new idea, the germ of a new discipline, breaks forth into visible existence, even though merely to exist is in its case to be guilty of open rebellion. There is a close parallel between the history of Classicism and that of the Catholic Church. Romanticism, Realism, and

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Modernism are all Protestant; or, perhaps, a more accurate statement of the case would be this — Romanticism and Realism were Protestant, but Modernism is so entirely independent of Classicism as to have not even the idea of protesting against it. Meanwhile Classicism is forced to accept — which it does with loud complaints and many an anathema — the position of *one of* the art religions instead of *the* art religion; and it may maintain this kind of existence for a long time to come, shorn of all authority to punish heterodoxy, and compelled to see heterodoxy lifting its many heads in bold independence, yet still supported by venerable usage, and by the devotion of faithful adherents.

A discipline which has long exercised supreme power is seldom very justly estimated immediately after the overthrow of its supremacy; and we are still too near to the revolutionary period to appreciate the services of Classicism at their precise value. One thing in favor of it is, however, perfectly clear; we can all see that it was a true discipline, that it had definite purposes in culture, and trained men to these ends with elaborate care, and made them study patiently and long, comprehending perfectly the uses of culture, and willingly giving the long years and the painful labors that it needed. But it is not so clear that the rebellious or independent forms of art

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have the character of discipline to anything like the same degree; and in French art education, as Classicism has been weakened, discipline has been relaxed. Another great virtue in Classicism was its high-minded contempt for the opinion of the uneducated. In literature it effectually excluded the vulgar by adopting two languages never used by them, and which could not be mastered without the labor of half a life. In painting it excluded the vulgar, as much as it possibly could, by greatly interpreting, and never imitating, nature, by never illustrating matters of every-day interest, and by a severity of aspect supported by evident erudition; and the consequence of this bold attitude that Classicism adopted towards persons without culture was that these very persons felt themselves compelled to respect the true students, and no more thought of setting up their crude notions in opposition to culture than an English landowner of the present day thinks of following his own notions of the law in opposition to the advice of counsel. If you set an ignorant person before a page of Greek, or the marble Theseus in the British Museum, he knows and feels that he cannot judge of either of them, which is exactly all that he can be made to know, or required to feel; but, if you give him an English book, or a picture of modern life, he has no hesitation about writing

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a criticism of one or the other, and selling it for thirty shillings to some newspaper.

The movement towards more general sympathy which caused the breaking-up of the classical authority was dangerous to art, because it interested the people and made them discuss the matter as if it were within their competence; and the consequence has been that, in these days, though artists have emancipated themselves from a severe and august tradition, they have fallen under the yoke of a many-headed master, who is in some ways more difficult to serve. The high-priests of Classicism did not, it is true, tolerate the slightest divergence from the severity of their law, but the aspirant had the advantage that he could always easily ascertain what was required of him, and knew that his obedience would be rewarded by unfailing encouragement, and his excellence, if he attained it, by honor that was never withheld. It is not so clear what the modern public wants, or will reward; and many artists labor now in the darkness of a grievous perplexity. Since the public has not yet defined its theory of art, and since all external authority in any degree respectable has now for some time been overthrown, and is not likely to be set up again in our time, I say that the only rule left for an artist to work by is the law of his own sincerest preferences. Modern artists may

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be broadly divided into two categories: we have those who paint for the market, and those who paint for the pleasure of obeying their own instincts; and the latter are by far the more respectable of the two, and the more likely to do great things. It remains only to be observed that the great danger of painting in obedience to one's own instincts is the possibility of a belief that culture is no longer necessary; whereas even our preferences themselves may be modified by culture, and our faculty of choice improved.

It is impossible to conceive a condition of anarchy more absolute than that which exists at present in the world of art. The Classical doctrine is dead; the pre-Raphaelite doctrine is dead; the movement of Romanticism was spent long ago, and is now seen to have been a mere temporary enthusiasm, useful as a solvent of Classicism. Even Realism is dead also, or at least gains no new supporters; and the influence of Ruskin, which at one time promised to become dominant in the English school, has ceased even to be perceptible. But although no artistic creed may be consciously received in these days, the work done in them will bear the impress of the time, and be moulded by it into something less heterogeneous than the state of apparent anarchy might lead some of us to imagine. If art is not to be allowed to follow much higher ideals than the ideals

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of society, let us at least hope that it will seldom fall beneath them. The goal towards which popular encouragement is now forcing the art of Painting, as much as it possibly can, has already been reached in another art by a distinguished living novelist, who takes care never to be less intelligent, or less artistic, than the society he describes and writes for, but who is at least equally careful not to go too far beyond it. Henceforth, I apprehend, painting and literature are both destined to go along with whatever intellectual progress may be achieved by society generally, and their chief law will not be any grand artistic faith, such as men used to be willing to starve for, but the condition of the market by which they seem now to intend *not* to starve.*

* The classical contempt for the opinion of the ignorant which is praised here as conducive to the true interests of art, does not imply any contempt for persons ignorant of art. A painter may see that his mother knows nothing of art, and still have a respect for her amounting to veneration, just as a scholar may see that his mother knows nothing of Greek, and still believe her to be both good and wise. And even, setting affection aside altogether, the scholar may see that some stranger is ignorant of Greek, and still respect him for his knowledge of matters beyond the range of what is called scholarship. The practical utility of the contempt for uneducated opinion is, that without it no one can pursue severe studies to any good result. The right temper is to do our work as well as we can, without in the least troubling ourselves about either the approbation of the uneducated, or their blame.

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PAINTING IN FRANCE.

I.

ALL men, who follow some pursuit which has not money for its first object, work so far at a disadvantage that money will nevertheless, in spite of all attempts to forget the existence of it, and the tyranny of it, thrust itself continually forward as an intrusive, and importunate, and impertinent consideration, from which there is no deliverance, except by some degree of concession and obedience. To be devoted with your whole soul to one religion, and to have another religion perpetually pestering you with claims that it is mighty enough to enforce by the utmost extremities of moral and physical torture, is, and has ever been, the unfortunate position of many a true artist, and writer, and student of science and philosophy. Money-worshippers never suffer from a false position of this kind; their aims are in unison with all their needs; if they succeed in their one object, which is the accumulation of wealth, the wealth itself satisfies all their instincts and desires; it gives them luxury and consideration, and it gives

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them what is better than any inherited splendor, the inward sense of victory, and pride in a visible and indisputable success. If they fail and suffer, they take the chastisement at the hand of their own master, of the master they have always looked to as the natural ruler of the destinies of men; it is gold still which by its very desertion of them only confirms the faith and doctrine of their whole lives, their faith in its sun-like glory and warmth, their conviction that whoever loses that light and heat can have no other source of contentment, but must freeze and shiver in chill misery, and grope in a void of darkness. But no man who is devoted to any study whatever for its own sake has this unreserved faith in money, and willing submission to it. To men of this class, money is either an alien power or a hateful private necessity. The earning of it is not the object of life with them, but an interference and an interruption. The consideration of salableness in works of literature and art, and of pecuniary returns for scientific investigations, are, so far as intellectual views extend, altogether irrelevant. The men who give their lives to great intellectual pursuits, would be turned aside from their chosen paths by the search for material values. The vow of voluntary poverty which many early Christians took upon themselves for the better attainment of their ideal life, and which to this day is perpetuated in the time-honored customs of the Continental churches, is an example of the long

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rebellion of the soul against a power which it knew to be hostile.

The power of money over art has never been stronger than it is now, and the manner of its operation, being very subtle and difficult to trace, increases the power by making it irresponsible. When a banker or speculator, some Rothschild or Pereire, goes to the annual exhibition of French Art in the Salon, and buys some picture there, he is not held responsible for the artistic qualities of the work, for which the artist alone is blamed or praised by the newspapers, as the case may be. And yet in a certain intelligible sense it is these bankers, and other rich men, who paint the pictures. They do not mix the colors and apply them with their own hands; nor do they even, except in the case of works directly commissioned by them, offer any suggestions as to the choice of subject and manner of execution; but still, since the great majority of pictures are painted to suit what are perfectly well known to be their tastes, it may be truly said that the artists aim rather at the realization of what the rich man likes than what they themselves care for. Enormous quantities of pictures are in this way painted every year expressly for the market, with care and trained skill, but no more artistic passion or enthusiasm than goes to the manufacture of any other elegant superfluities. And the evil of it is, that unless a picture is painted in this way, with the most careful attention

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to the points which happen just now to make a work salable, it is not likely to be sold at all. It may no doubt occasionally happen that the aspirations of an artist accord precisely with the tastes of buyers, and in cases of this kind pictures may be salable without being expressly adapted to the market; but these cases do not appear to be common. The usual course of an artist's life is something of this kind: — He begins, if he has anything of the true artist in his nature, by working with ardent aspiration after an ideal of his own, but after having done this for some years he finds it difficult to live by his profession, as hitherto pursued, and asks the advice of some successful artist or dealer, who tells him that if he wants to earn money he must abandon these aims of his and endeavor to adapt himself to the tastes which for the time being are prevalent amongst buyers. The next step is an inquiry into the nature of these tastes, and if the painter is intelligent enough to enter easily into views which differ very widely from his own, he comes at last to understand, after a great deal of study and reflection, what it is that the public looks for and cares about. It is not easy to find this out; the instinct which defines the state of the public taste is usually the result of much natural tact in combination with long experience, and the best critics living are as children in this matter when compared to experienced dealers such as Goupil, or Agnew, or Wallis. The difficulty is that buyers are

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usually quite incapable of analyzing or explaining their own feelings about art, and there are the most astonishingly subtle impediments to the sale of pictures of which nobody would ever dream who had not studied the matter very closely, and of which the buyers themselves are as ignorant as the very simplest of artists. But even if the artist has not accomplished the very difficult feat of fathoming the public mind, it is enough for our present argument that he should have applied his thoughts to it, because reflections on the tendencies of public taste are usually followed by more or less successful attempts to conform to it, and whether these attempts are successful or not, they mark the great turning-point in the career of the artist. Hitherto he has worked for his own ideal — henceforth he will try to realize the ideal of somebody else.

So soon as a painter does this, his career as a true and original artist may be considered at an end, and it is hard upon him that he should be criticised for work which is no longer in any genuine sense his own. It may be urged that the execution is his, and even the choice of the particular subject, and of his models; but the truth is that since in both execution and choice of subject he has constantly thought of what will catch the buyer rather than of what might satisfy himself, there is not one atom of paint on the canvas which is laid there exactly as he would have it if he had no public to consult. In other respects,

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perhaps, the change of masters will not have been very onerous. The public may be an exacting master, but every true artist is far more dissatisfied with his own work, when he attempts to realize his own aspirations, than the most critical public is likely to be when he really makes an endeavor to please it. The case is like the parallel one of the moral and religious ideal. We may try to do what is right in the world's eyes, or to satisfy the aspirations of the soul. It is easy to fulfil the little observances that the world requires, the decent outward behavior, the moderate taxes of charity, the regular attendance at church; but it is not so easy, if we have any moral ideal, to rise to the height of it, and *live* there, day after day, and year by year. Now these artists, who have abandoned their own ideal in conformity with the requirements of the market, are leaving a hard master for an easy one; they have been starving on the tops of pillars, like St. Simeon Stylites, and now they have come down from their pillars and may live their little day like everybody else, prosperous craftsmen, working to order, and carefully attending to the exigencies of the *mode*, like fashionable tailors and bootmakers.

This comparison may seem exaggerated, but it is quite literally applicable. One of the most successful of modern painters of genre owes his fame in a great measure to the excellence of his millinery, in which he is greatly helped by his wife, who kindly

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consents to dress in the most expensive and fashionable manner. It is found that the outlay on this lady's wardrobe is amply repaid by the sale of her husband's pictures, who receives magnificent prices, and never fails to find his market. Much of this success is due to the dresses, and to the lady whose good taste chooses them for her own wearing. Can we severely blame an artist and his wife, who by a little harmless plotting about millinery, contrive to live handsomely in pleasant Parisian society, and will leave, nevertheless, a comfortable provision for their children? A painter who comes down from his pillar that he may gather these advantages, seems the more excusable when we reflect that by staying up there he would have seen his children uneducated and his wife a drudge.

Artists may be broadly divided into two classes, — the Bohemians and the men of the world. Bohemianism is not a natural and permanent state of the mind, but a protest against what is felt to be hostile to certain studies and pursuits, in the received theories of respectability. The extreme Bohemians have three insurmountable defects; they are dirty, they are conceited, and they do not think it a point of honor to pay their debts. This is one of those instances, however, in which respectable society has itself to blame for the condition of its outcasts. The artistic Bohemian loses the good discipline of society, because he finds in it so little sympathy with his

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objects, and especially so little indulgence for his poverty. In circles where art is considered either a degrading handicraft, or a mild form of insanity, and where honorable poverty is held to be ridiculous, there is little encouragement for men who have chosen art as the aim of their lives, and are bearing poverty bravely for its sake. What throws them out of society primarily is this feeling that they can find no sympathy there; and indeed it is quite surprising how inevitably a young man, who is devoted to any great pursuit which does not promise large pecuniary returns, comes to be considered a fit object for ridicule or pity. In France he is familiarly said to be "*toqué*," "*timbré*," &c., and in England he is pronounced to be "mad." In spite of the defects of the Bohemians, it is easy to see that they have been driven into Bohemianism, and are not altogether responsible for its aberrations.

The artist *homme du monde*, on the other hand, has none of these visible blemishes, and the present tendency of the profession is to produce men of the world in a constantly increasing proportion. Of all conformists to usage none conform more scrupulously than painters, when once they have made up their minds to quit the Bohemian camp. If this progress continues, it is likely that in two generations artists will be looked up to as models of refinement, — a charming prospect, but involving very serious consequences, which are already only too heavily felt.

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When artists are gentlemen of fashion, they must earn incomes large enough to support that character, and they will no more be able to afford the luxury of pursuing art for its own sake than if they were absolutely penniless. Indeed, improbable as it may appear, it is nevertheless true, that painters who never sell anything are always far more courageous in attempting purely artistic enterprises than their successful brethren. The unsuccessful are so accustomed to see their pictures return upon their hands that it does not appear to signify very much what they paint, and so they paint very often for artistic purposes only; whereas the successful artist cannot paint for art without the uncomfortable reflection that every quarter of an hour so occupied is costing him ten shillings.

The distinction between painting for art and painting for the market is so little recognized, that these pages may seem exaggerated or uncalled-for. The work that is done to please and to be sold appears to all for whom it is intended so exactly in accordance with right reason, that they never suspect, whilst the praises of the artist are on their lips, how utterly, to win their favor, he has degraded himself in his own eyes, and in the eyes of all his brethren. To love art with all the strong passion of the man born to do great things, and then, in opposition to all his natural preferences and instincts, to labor day by day in the production of that which he knows to be trifling

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and valueless, merely because it is a marketable commodity, is not this enough to make any man of naturally high feeling despise himself, and bitterly acknowledge the futility of his life? There appeared some time ago, in one of the magazines, an article called "The Story of a Spoilt Life," the narrative of an existence which was supposed to be spoilt because it ended in indigence and the hospital. But what of the spoilt lives that end in luxury and ease, bought at the cost of all their early aspirations?

Therefore, when amongst the mass of artists who sell themselves we see the few nobler ones stand lofty and pure, like the snows of the immovable Alps, how can we venerate them enough?

Artistic honor and purity are preserved so long as the painter frankly sets before us his own innermost thought; and they are sullied and lost when, with a view to gain our approbation and our money, he sets before us what he does not inwardly prefer, but what he imagines will chime in with our own preferences.

Whatever may be said against Courbet, it cannot be said of him that he has ever fallen away, for one day, from this high and severe law of artistic honor. Many of his pictures are quite unpleasant and repulsive to me; but how I respect the man for never having tried to please me, for never having laid himself out for the small printed compliments of critics, or the admiration of *messieurs* and *demoiselles!*

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But is it not the object of art to please, — to please *us*, the very *messieurs* and *demoiselles* above mentioned? There is a theory of this kind current in the world, — a theory first set in motion by one or two critics to please their readers, whom the said theory suited *à merveille*, since it flattered them quite pleasantly. But it is utterly degrading to art as an expression of the human soul, for it makes a subtle flattery its whole purpose and aim. What flattery is more subtle and servile than that of expressing other people's views, and not your own, in order to extract money from their pockets?

The object of great art is not to please either me or you, or any other spectator; and as soon as ever we see reason to suspect that a painter has been trying to please us, we may despise him, or pity him, as a miserable flatterer and parasite. "When a truly great artist takes up palette and brushes, he has but one duty, but that is a sacred one — to express his best thought in the way that best expresses it. If the result pleases us, it is well; if it displeases us, it is well also; it is probably even better. In any event, if the painter has acted quite faithfully, we have no right to complain of him, and it would certainly be most unreasonable in us to be angry with him for speaking his own mind and not ours. We have everything to gain by the sincere expression of his thought and feeling, but the treacherous element in art is flattery. There is an impression that the only

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artists who live by flattery are the portrait-painters; but an artist can flatter you just as easily when he is painting a landscape or a group of cattle as your own portrait. He knows that you like neat little touches for foliage, and neat little twirls of the brush for fur, and dots of sparkle on eye and horn, and he gives you these things to flatter you. And he flatters you equally in that which he withholds and refrains from. Perhaps he would like to paint for tonality, as Troyon did, but he knows that you do not care for tonality, and refrains; or he would like to paint the splendid and rare effects, as Turner did, but he knows that you would be offended by them, and refrains.

Now with reference to this great quality of sincerity in art, we have all of us a certain plain duty to perform. First, I think that we never ought to speak slightingly or sarcastically of any artist who is evidently sincere, and we ought to be able to bear patiently his divergence from our own notions of what is best in favor of his sincerity and truth. I am not speaking here of his truth to nature, but of his truth to art; that is, his fidelity to his own convictions about art. And here we may easily fall into one of the commonest and most uncharitable of errors. A belief is prevalent that, when a painter paints in some unusual manner, he is possessed with the idea that this way of painting is for all men, and under all circumstances, the best way; whereas, he probably only thinks that it is the way which suits

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his own faculties best, and if he thinks so, rely upon it he is right. What is most disliked in the work of truly original men is due to an unfortunate impression, which, so far as I have observed, is almost always communicated by such work, that the maker of it is conceited. For instance, many imagine that Courbet is conceited, but he is only honest.

The common belief about the famous chief of realism is, that he maintains the doctrine of servile imitation of nature. The doctrine of Courbet, as expressed directly to myself in his own studio, is something different from that — and widely different. He maintains merely this, *that every artist, when he paints, should remain absolutely faithful to his own impressions;* and he, Courbet, has boldly obeyed this law in the whole course of his practice. If all other artists obeyed it, the consequence would *not* be that we should have a uniform servility to nature, but an art as various as human temperaments are various. If all art were strict copyism of nature (as the enemies of realism falsely represent it to be), then all art would be as much alike as photography is; whereas, if Courbet's theory, which, it may be observed in this place, was also the theory of Turner, were carried out to its full extent, we should not have any uniformity at all, not even that degree of uniformity which constitutes a school. Nor should we, on the other hand, have that uniformity which springs from a common desire to anticipate the wants of the public. Every artist

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would paint his own impressions, disciplining himself only with a view to express them as clearly and as emphatically as possible. So that this doctrine, which has been called Realism, might have been better called Individualism. It is not material at all, it is intensely and fanatically spiritual, believing not at all in the accurate representation of matter, but surrendering itself utterly to the impressions and sensations of the mind.

A prodigious development of self-confidence! To believe steadily and firmly all one's life through in the guidance of one's own natural instincts, quite independently of all human precedent and authority, can the vanity of the individual human being carry him beyond such insanity as this? It is worth while to dwell a little longer on the point, for it concerns not Courbet alone, but all artists, and especially all young artists who are entering upon their labors and forming their habits. It concerns also the public which is interested in art, and which may feel doubtful as to the degree of liberty it ought to accord to the vagaries of individual eccentricity.

The real nature of the warfare which under various names, and under apparently different forms, has been going forward in the art-schools of Europe during the last forty years or more, has always been that of a conflict between the commands of authority, and the sincere preferences of the soul. We cannot understand a conflict of this kind, and the strength and

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heat of passion elicited on both sides, without remembering that painting is a direct utterance and expression, just as much as speaking is, and that a painter in every line he lays and in every hue he mixes must say one of two things, — either that which he thinks or that which he does *not* think. The whole controversy lies in this nutshell. The classical school has been insisting for generations on the duty of submission to its authority, on the duty, that is, of saying always what classicism thinks, quite independently of any consideration for the ideas and preferences of the artist; and the classical training has always made it its business to stifle and repress all personal feelings and affections, and even to deny the right of exercising intelligence, except such a limited amount of it as may be necessary for the perfect reception of a tradition. On the other hand, all the rebels maintain the right to be sincere in art, but many of them lack the courage to be sincere always, and they often paint insincerely still, not out of deference to classicism, but in order to catch purchasers; and the latter kind of insincerity is perhaps the more degrading of the two.

It does not follow, however, that the submissive men who take upon themselves the yoke of classicism are necessarily in every case insincere. Many men are born, as it were, with hollow places in their minds that can be filled with anything that other people choose to put into them. Cooks have a way of mak-

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ing the pastry of tarts to be filled at some future time with any kind of jam that may be preferred, and so the tart which in the first stage of its existence has no preferences whatever becomes afterwards quite sincerely a strawberry or a raspberry tart as the case may be. So it has been with numbers of second-rate artists. Bred in Paris under the influence of Ingres they were classicists; if they had been bred in England when pre-Raphaelitism was fashionable, they would have been pre-Raphaelites, in either case very sincerely. But there is another sort of men who, to pursue the homely simile just made use of, have the jam in them from their birth, as pomegranates and pine-apples have, and who can only be turned into something different by first submitting to be emptied of all that is richest and best in their own nature.

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II.

THERE was once a very large, fine pomegranate in a basket of oranges. And when the oranges were cut, they gave out yellow juice, but when the pomegranate was cut, it gave out red juice. Then all the oranges declared that the pomegranate was the most intensely conceited fruit they had ever seen in their lives—why could it not give out yellow juice as they all did? On which the pomegranate made the following solitary reflections: "It is very curious that everybody calls me conceited, for I never thought about myself either one way or the other till now." And it must be confessed that the pomegranate, though it was quite true that he had never been conceited before, became rather proud and scornful in consequence of the injustice of the oranges, and thought his own juice, red as it was, somewhat better and more valuable than any mere yellow juice ever could be.

This large, fine pomegranate came into the world at Ornans, in the department of the Doubs, June 10, 1819, and was called Gustave Courbet. The child lived at first under clerical influence, and began his

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education at a seminary, but completed it at the college of Besançon. Few parts of France are more beautiful than the valley of the Doubs, and Courbet has always preserved a strong landscape instinct which may owe much of its vigor to an early delight in the picturesque scenery that surrounded him. He was intended for the bar, but could not resist the passion for painting, and when he was sent to Paris to study law, neglected it altogether for the fine arts. Strictly speaking, he never had anything like what is usually understood by an education; that is, he never underwent that long and steady course of discipline which gives great practical certainty and efficiency at the sacrifice of originality. Courbet learned his art in very various ways; he was at one time pupil of a painter called Flageoulot, a follower of David; but of course the traditions of the school of David could have no hold upon him, any more than traditions of hen-wisdom have upon young ducks, and therefore we cannot consider this pupilage to have been for Courbet in any sense an education. Afterwards he worked hard at the open *atelier* kept in Paris by Suisse, a place where there is, strictly speaking, no instruction, but where young and older artists draw just as they like from the living model. He had a few lessons from Steuben, and worked a little in the *atelier* of Hesse. This isolation and independence were serious obstacles to his early career, because they made him disliked by the influential painters

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who kept the great *ateliers*, and who often had the power of rejecting works presented at the exhibition. Courbet was thus rejected during six years, which only confirmed him in his own ways of work, and led to still greater self-assertion in his art.

It is difficult in these days to realize quite fully the degree of animosity which a nature so independent as that of Courbet must have excited twenty years ago amongst artists devoted to the maintenance of tradition. He was accused of intense pride, an accusation which in some measure justified itself by developing still farther the energy of his self-reliance, and stiffening his originality into stubbornness. When men of original endowment are treated with gentleness, and received as if their originality were the most natural thing in the world, it is surprising how willing they are to make great concessions to custom and tradition, and how little they plume themselves upon their peculiarities. But if you repel them, and ridicule them, and treat them with manifest injustice, then they become obstinate, and assert their especial powers emphatically, and all the slumbering pride of their strong natures flashes out in scorn of you, as concussion makes the latent heat of a cannon-ball burst forth in a sheet of flame. It may be doubted, however, whether we have had our true Courbet, or our true Turner, for the pride of both was irritated into a morbid development. If they had been let alone, or received at least without jeering, their art

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might have been equally original, but it would have been less eccentric, — equally forcible, but more urbane. Men of that calibre meet contempt with contempt, and scorn with scorn; but the scorn harms them by disturbing the balance of their faculties, and especially by depriving their work of gentleness and amenity.

The river Doubs, which gives its name to the department where Courbet was born, takes its source in the Jura, flows first to the northeast, then turns suddenly to the left, and after some time turns again, so that it flows henceforth in a direction precisely contrary to its first direction. The tongue of land thus enclosed by the river resembles in shape the end of the Italian boot; and Ornans, the birthplace of Courbet, is situated in the middle of the peninsula, between the young mountain stream at Arçon and the mature river that reflects the strong forts of Besançon. Ornans has also a little river of its own, the Loue, which, after having gained strength in many windings, joins the Doubs below Dôle. It is a country in the highest degree favorable to the development of a painter. The valley of the Doubs, easily accessible from Ornans, is one of the most beautiful in France. Some years ago the present writer made up his mind to live there, and explored it in various ways, staying at different places and examining every unoccupied house. Whenever a place seemed suitable, I took care to study its im-

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DEER AT THE RIVER.

Courbet.

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mediate neighborhood, seeking especially for those natural beauties which are most dear to me,—the rocky dells with pure refreshing streams, the groups of majestic trees, the towering heights of hill and cliff, and the level meadows by the shore of the green transparent river. The whole valley was enchantingly beautiful; the hills were lofty enough, and especially steep enough, for sublimity, with bold, clear-cut curves of inexpressible majesty and grace. At their feet was a narrow plain of fertile land, through which wandered the waters of the Doubs—waters so exquisitely pure that they seemed like flowing emerald to me who had come from the banks of the yellow and opaque Yonne.

In this country Courbet got a love for rocky streams and woody haunts of the wild deer, which is part of his complex nature as an artist. He has a very strong landscape instinct which shows itself not only in the production of many landscapes, but also in the frequent choice of sylvan backgrounds. Let it be noted, in the contrast between him and Ingres, that Courbet loves landscape, and paints it with strong sentiment and affection, whilst Ingres neglects and despises it; and when he introduces it at all—as, for instance, the rock and vegetation in the "Source"—does so on strictly conventional principles. This is one of the most marked distinctions between the realist and classical schools. Almost every realist painter enjoys landscape, if only in a background; but the classicists

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either have no enjoyment of it, or repress this taste as contrary to the severity of their art.

Courbet does not care for beauty, yet nature liberally endowed him with it. He is a well-grown, powerful man, with a face that Sylvestre not inaptly compared to those of the handsome Assyrian kings on the marbles from Nineveh, and the skin of a woman, and an eye of singular beauty and mildness. I never met a man who more entirely conveyed to me the impression of perfect simplicity and honesty. His politeness takes rather the form of kindness and gentleness than ceremony, and so remarkable is this gentleness that one asks how this quiet, beautiful man can have had fire enough in him to fight the world so long. But the fire flashes out now and then in moments of imperious energy. He said to me once, — "Mettez vous en face de la nature, et puis peignez comme vous sentirez — pardieu!" The final *pardieu* was electrical, and whenever I set myself to work from nature it rings in my memory yet.

There is never any opinion about the practical work of painting, though it be founded upon a life's experience, but you will hear some diametrically opposite doctrine, equally supported by long observation and practice. Thus in England we are constantly told that for a picture to be safe during its progress, it must be "kept pale." * Courbet, who

* This is founded on the practice of Turner. Many contemporary English painters work upon perfectly white grounds.

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works always upon dark red or brown grounds, earnestly recommended me to keep my work dark enough, reserving the light for the last, and gradually coming up to them, by thicknesses of opaque color. He once made use of a comparison which clearly explains the philosophy of his execution. As the day dawns, objects gradually become more visible; out of twilight they come at length into daylight, and at last the sun strikes them with brilliant touches. So a picture by Courbet begins in twilight, and gradually becomes lighter and lighter, till finally come the highest and brightest lights of all. I mention this matter because it has a certain interest, but without attaching more importance to it than it deserves. Whether an artist works from dark to light, or from light to dark, or from a middle tint upwards and downwards at the same time, is of little consequence to the result, except so far as the process may suit his fancy. Whilst we are upon the subject of technical practice, it may be added that in his landscapes Courbet has recourse to all manner of artifices. He seeks especially for the impression of everything that helps to indicate and suggest, but without study of the forms, and the consequence is an immense variety of dots and dabs and draggings, and plasterings with the fingers or the palette knife,

The practice is a reasonable one for the preservation of luminous quality, but it often happens that colors on white grounds, from a want of sufficient sustenance beneath them, appear crude.

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out of which confusion the landscape comes finally, true enough in aspect, but without a particle of design. Whatever may be true of the figure, it is scarcely possible to suggest the infinity of natural landscape by any simple painting, and before a picture, whether in water-color or oil, arrives at that degree of confused richness which reminds us of the profusion of nature, it has generally got into all sorts of messes. Courbet is fond of messes, and of what are called "tricks," and I never saw a palette less orderly than his, but there are certain qualities in nature which he admirably feels and renders. On the other hand, he is eminently straightforward in execution whenever his purpose may be attained in a simple way, and some of his figure pictures are excellent examples of fine brushwork. The choice of his types is so far peculiar that he rejects beauty, or at least has such a horror of prettiness that he would rather paint forms which are frankly ugly than those which in their beauty might incur the imputation of being pretty; but there is nevertheless a certain massive grandeur in his men and women which may well be a sufficient aim for an artist, and which Rembrandt would have accepted as a compensation for the deficiency of grace. A story is told of the Empress Eugénie which bears very closely upon this subject. One day she visited the Exhibition of 1853, and finding there a picture of horses, very powerful but not graceful animals, made some observa-

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tion in that sense to a gentleman who attended her. He answered, "Madame, ces chevaux sont des Percherons," — a breed much esteemed for its working qualities. Shortly afterwards Her Majesty came to the "*Baigneuses*" of Courbet, in which two immensely powerful women have just come out of the water, and exhibit all their muscular development. "Et celles-ci," said the Empress, "sont, je pense, des Percheronnes." *

The human side of Courbet's art proves a simple openness to whatever happens before his own eyes (always very valuable to an artist), but suggests neither literary culture, nor any wide range of thought. Seeing men breaking stones, he is struck by the hardness and monotony of their work, and makes a picture of them, to glorify the humblest and rudest forms of toil. Having taken part in picturesque French hunting-scenes, he must needs paint them, and does so in a grand masculine way; the "Hallali du Cerf," and the "Combat des Cerfs," being perfect types of the sort of picture most suitable for the entrance to a *château* near the great French forests. One day, being out on a pedestrian excursion in the environs of Montpellier, he met a

* A woman of gigantic development has lately exhibited herself in France as "Premier modèle de l'Académie de Londres." Such a model would not be selected by any academy; but Courbet would have made studies from her quite seriously. She was what the Empress would call a "Percheronne."

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friend of his, M. Bruyas, and commemorated the incident in a picture. The most famous canvases of Courbet have for their subjects the common people, and everyday events about Ornans, such for instance as the "Enterrement à Ornans," the "Demoiselles de Village," the "Paysans de Flagey," the "Retour de la Conférence." Courbet has never, so far as I know, painted any illustration of past history, nor has he attempted to illustrate any important events of his own time. Proudhon attempted to give greater importance to his friend's art than can fairly be said to belong to it; for the philosophy, such as it is, which is at the bottom of this realism, is a very simple philosophy and a very narrow one, as narrow in its way, perhaps, as the stiff little creed of classicism itself. Courbet is simply a man of strong natural gifts, who, being at the same time very honest, and very determined, and having no intellectual range beyond the things which he sees with his eyes, has directed his great natural force persistently to the commemoration of the realities about him. Take away the ignorance of the realist, and his consequent indifference to the past and the remote, and it is just possible that, by the very enlargement of his sympathies, his art would concentrate itself less powerfully on the actual. Or again, if Courbet had been born with a delicate sense of beauty (and this sense of beauty, be it observed, is not a defect or a weakness, but a faculty half divine), his art would

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have been wholly different, and it would probably have been far less original, for he would have been overawed by the revelation of the beautiful in the masterpieces of the past, and would have submitted to them, and perhaps even humbly imitated them. Lastly, he has no trace of the critical faculty, he can execute bad work with satisfaction to himself, and though any excess of critical power in an artist is always detrimental to him by creating dissatisfaction with his work, and so lessening his productiveness, and thereby injuring his skill (which requires incessant manual practice), still a certain critical capacity is necessary to every true artist, because it helps him to refine and purify his work, it sustains him in the great labor of selection and omission, it guides him to noble preferences. What I admire in Courbet, is not his ignorance, but his sincerity; not his self-satisfaction, but his determination to give nothing but that which is his own; not his uncritical energy, but his obedience to the inward voices. I believe that it always amounts to a positive duty for an artist to obey these inward voices, to exhibit, so far as may be possible for him, his own ideal of art; and so far I go heartily with Courbet: but there is a question beyond this on which it appears we are not so likely to agree. I perceive that the inward voices, which said to me very loudly certain things fourteen years ago, say now quite different things, and urge me to other enterprises. It is clear to me that the

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artistic conscience, like the moral conscience, modifies itself greatly as our culture is enlarged, and that, although it is right to obey conscience, it is also at least equally necessary to enlighten it by culture. The fault I have to find with Courbet is that he has never yet perceived this, but has gone on all along blindly obeying his inward voices, without giving these monitors that additional light which might have greatly modified their commands. He has had faith and energy, but neither any culture,* nor even any conception of the use of culture and of the profound changes which it brings about in our habits and beliefs. Two strong passions combine to produce great writers and great painters, — the passion for enlargement and acquisition, and the passion for expression. Courbet has striven grandly and mightily to express himself, but hardly ever, it would appear, to enlarge and enlighten himself.†

* At least in the sense of improvement gained by reception of the ideas, and submission to the influences of others. So far as Courbet has been able to cultivate himself by continual self-expression, and by the study of nature, he has done so; but "culture," in the highest sense, implies much more than this.

† There is not space for further criticism of Courbet's pictures in the text, but it may be observed here that even the "Retour de la Conférence" is merely a satire against the priesthood from a very common point of view. Courbet, like most Frenchmen of the middle class, is strongly sceptical and anti-clerical; and so it was great fun for him to paint priests tipsy, with a peasant laughing at them, and his wife kneeling to them. But surely a satire of this kind does not require any great pro-

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His position has been greatly strengthened during the last few years, partly in consequence of the "Femme au Perroquet," and the "Remise de Chevreuils," which were more agreeable, and apparently more accomplished works than most of their predecessors, and also by the separate exhibition of a large collection of his pictures during the summer of 1867, and for nearly a year afterwards. Some extension of the artist's celebrity may be due to his friend Proudhon, who warmly supported his art from a moral and political point of view. It would have been interesting to analyze Proudhon's criticism of Courbet, but we have not space for a discussion which could not be brief. Proudhon was one of a considerable class of vigorous intellects which being entirely destitute of any faculty for the appreciation of art, see, nevertheless, that art as an existing fact is too evidently important to be passed over, and so endeavor to comprehend it in their own way. Proudhon could not endure that men should pursue art for its own sake, but would have it made subservient to moral and physical progress, which was merely an endeavor to reconcile the existence of art with his ideas of utility. For reasons which are not very clear, it struck Proudhon that the art of

fundity of thought, or even much wit. The satire was that of a somewhat coarse and uncultivated person; it would have been possible to wound the priesthood more scientifically and more keenly. To do them justice, they seldom get drunk, and yet are vulnerable enough.

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Courbet had a special utility of this kind, and once persuaded of this, the democratic philosopher did not care much about the quality of Courbet's pictures, of which he was utterly incompetent to judge, but hoisted his friend upon a lofty pedestal, and wrote chapter after chapter to herald the advent of a sort of art which, if not beautiful, was to be morally and politically beneficial. If writers who are destitute of the pictorial perceptions, yet have a command of language, become for some reason warmly interested in a discussion about artists, they are able to do considerable harm, because they combine the ignorance and wilfulness of infancy with the combative skill of trained intellectual manhood. When a clever talker, who has not a musical ear, rails against the music which has no recommendation except that it is artistically exquisite, and extols some popular air because it has some associations outside of art, he does exactly what Proudhon did when he undertook the eulogy of Courbet.

The system of separate exhibitions has never been much approved of in France; and there still lingers much of the old feeling that it is below the dignity of an artist to accept the shillings of spectators. Courbet, however, has on several different occasions disregarded this prejudice, and, perhaps, may have succeeded in partially weakening it. Matters which affect caste and social position are almost beyond the domain of reason, and depend very frequently

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upon the most fortuitous associations of ideas. It is thought degrading to an artist to accept a shilling from a person who goes to see his picture, because there is an association of ideas with showmen, just as in the higher classes it is thought degrading to paint a picture and sell it, because there is an association of ideas with manual labor. In the same way, if the public could see men of science at work in their cabinets, anatomy would be considered a degrading pursuit, because it would remind the vulgar of butchering. One of the best results of culture is that it in a great measure emancipates our minds from the effects of association, and enables us to judge independently. For instance, in this matter of the exhibition of pictures, simple reason, detached from disturbing associations, sees at once that the painter who receives money for works painted by himself is not paid as a showman but as an artist; he is paid for having painted the picture by persons who cannot afford to buy it, and therefore can only reward him in this way. It may also be observed that the shillings paid at the entrance are usually little more than enough to cover the expenses of these exhibitions, so that if it is degrading to the artist to profit by them, he is seldom so degraded. Collections of pictures by one painter are not popular with the general public, on account of the lack of variety, but they are supremely interesting to critics for the light they throw on the development of the artist.

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During the Great Exhibition of 1867, there were two exhibitions of this kind; the one of Courbet, already mentioned, and another of pictures by Edouard Manet, an artist who for the last two years has had the privilege of being the laughing-stock of all Paris,—a very good way of getting into the Temple of Fame, though perhaps not a very agreeable one. Like his predecessor, Courbet, Edouard Manet has devoted himself to other aims than the pursuit of the beautiful, and it is not to be denied that his pictures, on the whole, are rather remarkable for their ugliness; in fact, the ugliness thrusts itself forward in a way so obtrusive that the common spectator, who almost always fails to see the aim of the artist, concludes that he cannot possibly have any artistic capacity whatever. A picture, however, may be full of fine and manly work, full of intensity of emotion and keenness of perception, without being in the least pretty; and it would be easy to mention many admirable ones by elder masters which fully deserve places of honor in galleries of art, and yet would be altogether unsuitable for drawing-rooms. The notions current about Manet have, until quite recently, been curiously the reverse of the truth. When people saw that he painted in what they considered a slovenly and audacious manner, they concluded that he was an ignorant *rapin;* and when he began to be a good deal talked about, they inferred that his manner had been adopted in order to attract

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attention and catch purchasers. It turned out, however, that Manet was a gentleman and a man of the world, fond of society, and appreciated in it personally, whatever people might think about his pictures. And as for painting in his manner from motives of self-interest, to catch purchasers, it is evident that, with the great majority of his works unsold, he would not have persevered in this path after experience had fully proved that it would lead to no probable pecuniary success. The artists who really *do* paint to catch purchasers are always the least exposed to accusations of this kind, because their art is so entirely in the popular manner that they escape all unfavorable imputations. When a man who has strong private convictions is false to himself and learns the elaborate affectation of conformity, he is never accused of affectation, but so soon as he endeavors to express *himself*, and resolves to be faithful to his own nature, then everybody cries out how conceited he is, how affected he is, and it is said that he has done these things out of charlatanism, to attract attention and get money. If Edouard Manet had not had a private income he would have been compelled to abandon painting years ago; but it so happens that he is comparatively a rich man, and therefore can afford to be sincere.

The language of English art-criticism is as yet so poor that it often takes a paragraph of explanation to say what one would express in French by a single

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word. *Le but de l'art de Manet est simplement la tache.* I cannot translate this into English. Things are seen in nature as variously colored patches enclosed by more or less definite boundaries. The most advanced artistic way of seeing is that which sees the patches in their true relation. Artists may be classed according to the kind of truth they look for; for instance, David used to say that the outline was everything, and that, once a good outline obtained, his pupils might put within it whatever they chose. Another theory is that modelling is everything, and there is also a theory that the patch (which on the whole is the best English word I can find for *la tache*) is everything. Now, if you paint for modelling you are pretty sure to neglect the patch; and if you paint for the patch, though your modelling may have a certain valuable relative truth, it will be a mere compromise, and therefore, to critics who seek for it exclusively, will seem feeble and irregular and inadequate. The difference between the public and all artists who love their art, and pursue it with some enthusiasm, is that these theories or beliefs, which absorb the whole lives and energies of artists, are regarded by the outside public as technical matters of no concern. The artist paints for some artistic purpose, as the line, or the patch, and the people go to his picture for the subject alone, which may be insignificant or even repulsive. Manet's aims are exclusively technical; anything suits him as a subject,

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if only it presents a suitable arrangement of patches. As he does not care for the line, it follows that he does not care for beauty of form, and even chiaroscuro is secondary with him, and will be sacrificed on occasion to the exigencies of the patch. The reader may conclude that an artist who devotes himself to a technical aim of this kind is necessarily a man of small intellectual power; but it is curious how the artistic purposes gain in importance as we understand art better, and how at last all we ask of a picture is, that it present to us some side of art with skill and power. Thus, after sixty years of servitude to the line, Ingres drew the "Source;" and it may be that Manet will ultimately do something wonderful and admirable after long servitude to the patch. It is natural that his art should remind us of Spanish work, because he has a necessary affinity with that school; but he is not an imitator, and as M. Emile Zola said in his study of him, the pictures of his which we have seen are the artist's own flesh and blood.*

Courbet and Manet are both of them realists in the French sense of the word, which has acquired, by its use with reference to a particular sect of painters, a

* The pictures of Manet which best exemplify his manner of work are "L'homme mort," "L'enfant à l'épée," "Olympia," "Une Jeune Dame," and "Le Ballet Espagnol." The "Déjeûner sur l'herbe," much praised by M. Zola, is not so favorable an example, owing to the necessary absence of some of the most important elements of Manet's system of color.

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meaning considerably more contracted than its natural one. Any intelligent foreign critic who heard the French realists spoken of, without having read or heard French criticism, would suppose that the word included all the painters who base their performance upon the accurate study of reality; but the received sense of the word is much narrower than this. A realist, in France, is an artist who entirely rejects beauty, or at least is supposed to do so (for here again some reservation might be made), and who is supposed to paint whatever happens to be before him, taking the worst material along with the best, and the most vulgar subjects along with the most elevating, preferring indeed, when the choice is offered, mean and low subjects to sublime ones. The fact is, however, that the French idea of realism is an exceedingly vague one; and if you ask even an intelligent Frenchman to define it, the chances are that he will construct a definition that would include too much,—that would include whole classes of art which he would not call realism at all. As in the case of the English pre-Raphaelites, no satisfactory definition has ever been arrived at, and yet, however vague may be the use of the word, we come at last to have a general notion of what the public means by a realist picture, just as we know, in a general way, what we mean by a pre-Raphaelite picture. The French "realist," after all, is an artist who works in a particular temper; and realism is an attitude or humor of the mind, a humor

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strongly opposed to that which seeks to please by the flattery of conformity, and therefore opposed to the feeling of polite society in every country. Thousands of men who never cared for painting have the realist temper in its utmost development. They take a malicious pleasure in stating facts somewhat roughly and brutally, so as to shock people who are so very dainty that they will not see things as they are. The value of realism everywhere consists in its being a corrective of the superfine, and though there is often not a little affectation in realism itself, it is useful as an enemy of the far commoner affectation of refinement. When realism arose in French literature and art, men of sense were sick of the pretensions to taste which made people write and paint as falsely as they talked in drawing-rooms, and so they came to have a savage hatred for everything that aimed at elegance. They were sick, too, of the affectations of learning and scholarship, and instead of painting subjects from Greek and Roman history, they painted peasants and road-menders. The temper of realism is the temper which has driven many a sensible man from the society of pedants and dandies to that of common sailors and grooms, and which gives so many country gentlemen a serene pleasure in wearing shabby old clothes, and busying themselves about turnips and manure. Learning is good, and artistic taste is good; but when learning approaches pedantry, and when taste damages the manliness of character by the

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affectations of dilettantism, any deliverer may be welcomed; and the best of all deliverers are those who save us by giving a new direction to the very pursuits which were injuring us. It is, nevertheless, evident enough that this temper of realism is only valuable for its temporary use, as a reaction, and that, after all, elegance is better than coarseness, and learning than ignorance. The artist who paints a very graceful and refined form is better occupied than Courbet was when he gave weeks to the study of his monstrously fat *Baigneuse;* and when David attempted to realize the oath of the Horatii and the Death of Socrates, the long dwelling upon these great subjects was more elevating to the mind of the painter himself than any reflections, however ingenious, on the struggle of muscular "Wrestlers," or the death of a hunted stag. Realism, in short, is a sort of mud-bath which, under certain circumstances, may be highly beneficial to the system; but as a general rule we prefer to keep mud at a distance, and even admit, without accusation of effeminacy, a taste for clean linen and *savon de luxe.* There is, however, yet another aspect of realism, and a nobler one than its scornful protest against pedantry and dilettantism. It has, in some notable instances, protested quite as boldly against the cold indifference with which men of learning and taste so often pass the sublimity of common life. Realism has undertaken to show, and has proved triumphantly, that common men and

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women, such as those who live and work in the broad fields of France, are capable of exciting the poetical emotions. Jean François Millet has done more in this direction than any other artist, except perhaps Jules Breton; and Millet is the more essentially realist of the two. He was born at Greville, in 1815, and studied under Delaroche. He first exhibited at the Salon of 1844, and in his earlier years painted subjects such as "Œdipus," and "The Jews in Babylon," which have little connection with those with which his name is now universally associated. He lives at Barbison (Seine et Marne), and seeks such poetry as he can find in the fields of wheat and potatoes. Visitors to the Universal Exhibition of 1867 will remember some of the nine pictures he exhibited there, especially, perhaps, the "Glaneuses," and "L'Angelus du soir," and "Planteurs de pommes de terre." His art is direct and very modern in method, and quite singularly profound in sentiment, and his reputation has immensely increased during the last three or four years.*

Millet is little known in England except to our travelling countrymen. He did not exhibit at our International Exhibition of 1862, and the only picture of his which I remember to have seen in Eng-

* It may be as well to add that there are three artists of the name of Millet, — Frédéric Millet, the portrait-painter; Aimé Millet, who was at first painter and sculptor, but now follows sculpture almost exclusively; and Jean François Millet, who is mentioned in the text.

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land is a study of a ploughed field, with a plough stuck in the middle of it, in which it was difficult to recognize any sentiment beyond a conscientious desire to get the right look of turned earth.

Jules Breton is fortunate in having one of his very best pictures in the permanent gallery of the Luxembourg. "La Bénédiction des Blés" is, or ought to be, well known to every one who has visited that gallery during the last eight or nine years. It is a characteristic of the policy of the Church of Rome to make her presence felt everywhere, to go forth into the world outside the walls of her edifices, and carry her ceremonial into the crowded streets and the quiet fields. In this picture the priest goes in procession, carrying the host, to bless the standing corn, and with an odd mixture of splendor and homeliness, very touching, and very well felt and rendered by the painter, walks solemnly through the rich land, along the narrow path, in the beautiful sunshine of a bright afternoon. Nothing short of bigotry could make even a true Protestant insensible to the beauty of such a ceremonial. The picture is altogether a delightful one; the village maidens in their simple white dresses, the priest in his sacerdotal vestments, the maire and other villagers in their Sunday best, awkward as a feeling of unaccustomedness and bad country tailoring can make them, have a mixture of humor and sublimity incomprehensible by some critics (who call the picture a caricature), but, to my

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feeling, full of charm. A very grand picture, in another order of thought, because this time without humor, is that of the "Weed Gatherers." It is full of the sublimity of long and patient labor, and these poor women, tearing the weeds out of the heavy soil late in the weary day, are they not infinitely nobler and grander than the most successful lorettes of Paris, lolling at the same hour in carriages in the Bois de Boulogne? The "Fin de la Journée," a return from gleaning, is almost as noble; and the humor reappears in the Garde Champêtre on the left, but one's pleasure in this work is diminished by the bad color of the wheat, which is given of a foul brown, quite unlike the rich gold of real wheat. It may be observed, by way of parenthesis, that nothing is more rare in painting than a good rendering of wheat. Vicat Cole gets near the color, but is hard in manner, so that his wheat does not look rich enough or mysterious enough. Mr. Linnell the elder gets the color truly, but his strong mannerism repels many, and detracts from the sobriety of his painting. Holman Hunt is right also in color, but his wheat has no mystery or mass; it is so many blades, but never a sheaf, still less a field of several acres. But all these artists, being right in hue, please us better than Breton, whose color on this point is nearly always foul and wrong. There are differences, however, even in Breton's work; the wheat in the "Bénédiction" is pleasanter in color than that in any other

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picture I know by him. This tendency to translate delicate golden hues into a foul brown does not seem to affect Breton's perception of other colors; for instance, in the "Source au bord de la mer" there is much pure and pleasant coloring of sky and water. A defect of this kind ought not to prevent us from recognizing such rare and precious mental qualities as those which distinguish Jules Breton. He is a true poet and true painter, with an infusion of delicate humor which reaches our sympathies at once. The "Bénédiction" is, technically, a work of singular importance in modern art for its almost perfect interpretation of sunshine.

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III.

THE inconvenient French word *genre* has now passed into general use in England, because we have unfortunately not got a better word of our own; but as all foreign words must undergo some modification in their meaning before they can be naturalized, this one has become narrowed with us to one class of art, whilst in France it includes all painting which is not either history or landscape. Even in France, however, there is a tendency to restrain the word to domestic and incident painting, and to pictures of very limited dimensions. Strictly speaking, Rosa Bonheur's "Horse Fair" is a *tableau de genre*, because it is neither an historical picture nor a landscape, but it does not answer to the prevalent notion of a *tableau de genre* because it has no dramatic incident or illustration of character, and the canvas is eighteen feet long. The meaning of a word is, after all, dependent upon the way it is commonly used: a word means what it stands for, and not necessarily what the dictionaries say, and the expression *tableau de genre* in common conversation means *a picture of small dimensions representing human char-*

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acter dramatically by means of clothed figures. If *genre* is to be restricted in this way, and there is every probability that in twenty years the dictionaries themselves will so restrict it, then of course it can no longer extend to animal pictures, and portraits, and studies of still life, all of which are as yet theoretically held to be *tableaux de genre.* It is much to be regretted that we have not a good English word, on account of the lamentable English habit of affecting to pronounce foreign words as they are pronounced by the nations from whom we borrow them, a habit which injures our language, for people will neither learn the real foreign sounds nor use the plain English ones; and even if they *could* pronounce the foreign sounds, the intrusion of them in an English sentence would be incongruous and inconvenient.*

So far as the word *genre* will be used in this volume, the reader is requested to take it in the restricted sense which modern usage has given to it, and not in the comprehensive sense attributed to it

* For instance, there is the word *éclat*, which many English people are fond of using, and which few can pronounce. The natural and reasonable way, if they *must* use the word, would be to make it rhyme with cat, but being too refined and too well informed to do this, they make an indescribable sound, which they are quite right in supposing not to be English, but which is certainly not French. So with names; why not say Ingres according to English pronunciation, like *increase* with the *c* and *s* softened? The English usually call him "Angry," a name which, though suitable to his choleric temper, is not the name he bore in his own country.

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by the dictionaries. In the following pages the word will mean *the class of pictures of small dimensions in which human character is dramatically represented by means of clothed figures.* For instance, all the well-known pictures of Leslie are *tableaux de genre.*

The pursuit of this kind of art, which has now become the chief occupation of the schools of Europe, has immensely increased the popularity of painting, because it has interested a large public which was perfectly indifferent to art, and which, indeed, though it throngs exhibitions, and buys large quantities of pictures, still essentially remains so. Pictures of genre are popular; not in proportion to their artistic power, but so far as they are capable of amusing people who are uninterested in the artistic problems which have occupied the lives of the great painters, and the more brilliant the success of the genre-painters in this direction, the deeper is the injury which they have inflicted upon the art which has loftier aims. It is a far higher ambition in a painter to produce a perfect form, or a passage of exquisite color, than to make everybody laugh by a striking representation of Sancho Panza, or the Merry Wives of Windsor; and the success of genre-painters, even of such intelligent ones as Leslie and Knaus, is dangerous to art in proportion to their substitution of human for artistic interest. The world generally is not interested in any art for itself; and it is not painting alone, but music and creative

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literature which have a popularity grounded upon other things than art. The ordinary novel-reader, for instance, does not read for study, does not perceive that good fictions are works of noble invention and elaborate art, does not care to learn the best lessons they have to teach, and never for one moment enters into the thoughts and plans of the writer, but runs after the story alone, as a dog follows a hare. The same temper makes people go to pictures for what is called "the subject;" and it makes them estimate the art of painting, and its rank among human pursuits, according to the interest of the subjects it illustrates, and the vividness with which they are set before the spectator. The consequence of this is a profound misconception of the artistic nature and its purposes, and the painters of genre have greatly favored this misconception by paying attention to story and incident in order to sell their pictures. A few artists of various schools, who love art as art, resist this invasion of incident, on the ground that by distracting the mind from art it is even incompatible with it, and they take the most uninteresting subjects they can find, if they afford a pretext for artistic work. This is the real reason for that exceeding slightness of subject which has been so often remarked in French pictures. Many painters in France conscientiously hold the theory that the less *story* there is in a picture the better, because story distracts the attention from art; and so

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the painters of the naked figure content themselves with a "nymph" or a "Venus," and the landscape-painters are satisfied with three bushes, and a bit of distance, and a cloud.

The exigencies of genre as art are considerably less than those of the higher art which painted the naked figure of the size of life, and even less than those of that other art, unjustly reputed inferior, which studies the phenomena of the external world. If you examine any popular genre picture, you will find in all probability that at least five-sixths of its surface are occupied by imitations of drapery, and the interiors of rooms with their furniture. Now it is not easy to paint *anything*, but it is a great deal easier to paint a chair or a table than a tree, and a ceiling than the clouds, and a silk dress than the naked limbs, so that on the whole the work of the genre painter is relieved of many of the chief difficulties which torment the student of pure nature, whether he paints landscape or the nude figure. The one great difficulty of this kind of art lies in expression, and therefore the caricaturists, if only they can learn enough of the art of painting to do popular work, and will keep their exaggerations within bounds, are always likely to succeed better in genre than the great painters who are destitute of this especial gift. The point which I desire to insist upon is that men endowed with great natural faculties of the essentially artistic kind are likely to be

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surpassed in genre by far inferior men who have the single gift of seizing rapid shades of expression; so that such men as Leslie, and Heilbuth, and Knaus, would easily, in a time when genre is the only popular form of art, beat out of the field either Titian or Giorgione.* All sorts of short-comings are forgiven to the master of expression because he goes at once to the sympathies of everybody; and so bad color is bought, bad drawing is bought, bad tonality is bought, when the picture is alive with character.

But if the painter of genre can get on with slight artistic accomplishments, he needs one bright gift,—*intelligence.* There is a difference between the great artistic gifts and this faculty of intelligence; for instance, Thackeray and Leslie were very intelligent, but not Turner and Wordsworth; and a score of examples might be cited of men of great power who scarcely, in the strictest sense, appear to have had the gift of intelligence at all. It is an especial faculty, or an especial condition of the faculties, very necessary to critics and painters of genre, but not so

* I mean that if Titian and Giorgione had lived in our day, and been turned aside to genre painting by the prevalent fashion, which it is almost certain that they would have been, they could not have held their own against men like Knaus. I do not mean that if, living now, they painted the pictures known to us as Titians and Giorgiones, those pictures would not be appreciated; they would have painted nothing of the kind; the prevailing fashions would have made them attempt genre in order to earn a living.

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necessary to poets, and painters of landscape or the nude. The intelligence of the genre-painters places them in an exceptionally easy relation with modern society, which, at least in great cities, is itself intelligent, and appreciates the quality in others. To understand human nature well, to be keenly observant, to retain in the memory the marks upon which expression depends, and to paint with fair average dexterity, are the qualifications necessary to these painters.

It is a great secret of success in their craft to paint costume well, and to know all about it. Modern life they illustrate less frequently than that of the ages of costume: they are fond of the time of Henri IV. and François I., of Louis XIV. and Louis XV. In our own time the costume of women is suitable for art of this kind, but that of men is not; so that when a painter treats contemporary subjects, he is usually careful to exclude the male sex altogether, and the cleverest Belgian (Stevens), and the cleverest Frenchman (Toulmouche), have won reputation, chiefly by studies of single figures of ladies, very well dressed, and in apartments furnished with good taste. On the other hand, Meissonier, who avoids women so regularly that people say he is afraid of them, usually represents men in the costume of the last century. A genre-painter who wishes to earn a good income must not be above the careful study of tailoring and millinery, but he may make these studies more inter-

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esting to himself by painting costumes that are no longer commonly seen. In a certain sense the painters of genre, by their strict attention to truth in accessories, have thrown a light upon the life of former ages, and have done more to make us familiar with them than the more pretentious *peintres de histoire.* The "historical painters," as they called themselves, evolved antique life in a great measure out of their own imaginations, but the painters of genre have set it before us with wonderful vividness and truth, so that, although they do not call themselves historical painters, they paint more historically than those who prided themselves upon that title. Even the pictures of modern life which seem to us, what they really are, mere elegant trifles, will in future ages be trifles of remarkable interest, and people will go to Toulmouche and De Jonghe to peep inside a lady's boudoir of this nineteenth century and see the lady there taking off her glove, or putting it on, or looking at herself in the glass, or ringing the bell, — in short, doing one of those unimportant little actions which afford pretexts for pictures. In this manner painting goes on with one of its great functions, the illustration of the life of humanity; and the artists who are merely supplying the market with pretty objects of luxury are working for higher purposes than they think. Already genre is beginning to include historical painting very easy and naturally. Meissonier paints the battle of Solferino; Gérôme,

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the reception of Siamese ambassadors at Fontainebleau, and the death of Marshal Ney. Contemporary history is best treated by the painters of genre, and no doubt it will be skilfully and abundantly illustrated by them whenever the male costume becomes suitable for artistic purposes. At present, a gentleman is not a paintable object, unless he wears knickerbockers, or a volunteer uniform.

Genre is technically a rebellion against the classical discipline in many ways. First, it pays attention to passing shades of expression which classicism has always disdained; next, it takes note of all sorts of phenomena of light, such as reflected color, which Classicism rigorously refuses; and again, it delights in imitating and distinguishing the materials of costume, so that you may know at once what kind of silk or satin or muslin has been worn by the model, and Classicism admitted only "drapery" of an abstract kind. This distinction between the spirit of genre painting and that of classicism admits of a brief expression. Classicism rejected the transient, whilst Modernism seizes and records it.

Another distinction is that genre studies the body less than Classicism did, and the mind more.

This last is of immense importance, because it makes a step towards harmony with prevalent modern feeling. The classical artists gave their lives to the study of an object which the Christian nations know nothing whatever about, — the human body.

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The only people who study it are artists and medical men. Gentlemen interested in athletic pursuits know something about the development of a few muscles, but of the beauty of the body none but artists are competent to judge, because they are the only people who have opportunities for comparison. Classicism was at home in Greece, because everybody knew and cared about the glory of the perfect frame, and the artists only embodied an ideal which was floating in the minds of all; but when Classicism attempted to establish itself in the modern nations, it was condemned beforehand to early loss of influence unless it could bring the people round to its own point of view, and make them care to see beautiful bodies, and aspire to become beautiful themselves. If Classicism could have accomplished this it would have rendered a great service, because beauty of the classical kind requires perfect health, and perfect health requires a wise and rational life, without excess in pleasure, or in mental or physical toil. But the tendencies of modern life towards excessive development of special functions, and the difficulty with which people not familiar with the naked figure come to sever the ideas of nudity and immorality, were too strong for classicism to struggle against them permanently, though it gained ground for a time; and painters, in order to become popular, had to take just as much interest in the body as other people do, — to mind, that is, that the faces of their

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women were nice-looking, and that their figures were good enough to carry handsome dresses in a becoming and fashionable manner. The difference between this and the enthusiasm of the great classical artists for the divine and ideal beauty which the constant contemplation of nature had taught them to conceive and strive for, is the difference between a common sentiment and a sublime passion. So far as the study of the human body is concerned, the invasion of genre has been the degradation of art; but it is greatly superior to classicism in the extent of its sympathies and in its understanding of mankind.

The advent of the most modern forms of art, of fashionable genre-painting, and of the realism which is not fashionable, is traceable, I believe, in a great measure to the constant spread of democratic ideas. That realism is democratic no one who has seen Courbet's pictures, and read Proudhon's book, can for one moment doubt. That the painting of Toulmouche and Stevens is democratic, though in quite a different way, may, I think, be proved, though it is not so obvious. The plebeian nature may show itself in wealth as easily as in poverty; and in culture and intelligence as easily as in ignorance. It is difficult to write upon a subject so delicate as this, without enlisting the prejudices and susceptibilities of every reader on one side or the other, especially since the word "plebeian" has acquired a signification of contempt or blame, and "patrician" associa-

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tions of honor. The reader is requested to detach these associations from both words. By long habit and tradition, an aristocracy acquires certain preferences and ideas, and on the negative side a way of neglecting or despising the ideas which are useless to it. By the necessity of its situation, a democracy acquires certain other preferences and ideas, and an indifference or contempt for those which are useless or injurious to it. There are certain developments of taste which, though exquisite, are plebeian, and these are nowhere more visible than in the pretty Parisian apartments where such painters as Toulmouche place their well-dressed women. There is nothing incongruous in them, which is as much as to say that there is no trace of the life of former generations, a strikingly plebeian characteristic. Everything is very good and expensive, and usually even tasteful, but you see at once that everything has been bought of the upholsterer since M. Hausmann built the new boulevard.

These painters are sometimes plebeian in another way; they may have too much intelligence and too little dignity to be in harmony with patrician feeling. The profession of the painter of genre is very closely allied to the theatrical profession. Painting has transferred its services from the church to the theatre, setting up a little stage of its own, bounded by the four sides of the picture-frame. The difference between studying a character to act it, and studying the same

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character in order to paint a figure that shall act it, is not intellectually considerable.

The way in which a popular incident-picture originates is usually as follows: In the course of his reading, which is not often very extensive or original, the painter hits upon some anecdote which is interesting as an illustration of some well-known character belonging to the ages of costume. Suppose, for example, that he has been reading Taine's Essay on Racine; the anecdote about a carp which occurs towards the close of it could scarcely escape his attention: —

"Un jour, étant invité chez M. le Duc et averti qu'une nombreuse compagnie l'attendait pour dîner, il refusa, disant qu'il n'avait point vu depuis huit jours sa femme ni ses enfants, qui comptaient sur lui pour manger une belle carpe. Puis, avec une naïveté charmante, il montra au messager la carpe, qui coutât environ un écu: 'Jugez vous-même si je me puis dispenser de dîner avec ces pauvres enfants qui ont voulu me régaler aujourd'hui, et n'auraient plus de plaisir s'ils mangeaient ce plat sans moi. Je vous prie de faire valoir cette raison auprès de Son Altesse Sérénissime.'"

One sees immediately all that a clever painter of genre would make out of such a charmingly characteristic little story as this. We should have the great poet with his handsome frank face (Louis XIV. thought it one of the handsomest at his court), holding the glittering fish in both hands, whilst the royal messenger restrains the expression of his amazement

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at the singularity of a man who refuses the invitation of a prince, because he has promised to eat a poor dinner at home with a parcel of children. There would be much to excite the sympathy and interest of all spectators who themselves have any strong development of the parental instinct. Perhaps the young people might be shown in the background; at any rate we may be sure that no characteristic detail of costume would be neglected by the prudent artist. We should have Racine dressed in a grave and reputable manner, and the royal messenger in appropriate splendors. The carp would be very carefully imitated, in order to win the applause of that large public which supposes imitation to be the aim of art; and through the door of the poet's study, left intentionally ajar, we should have an opportunity of gratifying that disposition to pry into the privacy of celebrated people which is one of the most prevalent, and least respectable of failings.

In the latest development of genre, the *dramatis personæ* are, however, less intelligent, and less interesting than Racine. There appears to be, quite recently, a disposition to neglect that element of intellectual and literary interest which made genre the most amusing of all the forms of pictorial art, and the one which best illustrated human nature. As certain classes of polite society are satisfied with a mere *soupçon* of wit and information, and consider that they have done their duty to themselves and to each

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other when they have taken care that their clothes are fashionable and their manners good, so the heroines of Toulmouche, and those of a dozen or twenty other artists who follow the track where he has found his gold-mine, are much more distinguished by the excellence of their silks, and the perfection of their upholstery, than by any adornment of the mind. The art of painting splendid sofas, with carefully studied reflections on their shining satin, has become as important as the art of painting expression. The women in these pictures have no brains: they are sometimes pretty; they always have expensive tastes; but you never see them doing anything better than lounging, or looking in the glass, or receiving visits from other women as idle and expensive as themselves. It is precisely the women of this kind, whether they live in marriage or in concubinage, who have given that lamentable direction to the public opinion of their own class by which it has come to be held a disgrace to them to do anything of any use. They will not work with their hands; they are too ignorant and incapable for mental labor, and therefore, in the majority of cases, there is some male slave at work for them, who for his reward may see this luxury (which irritates him), and enjoy such conversation as may be carried on with a lady who neither reads nor thinks, nor has ever even acquired that homely wisdom which our equally illiterate grandmothers gathered in the kitchen and the farm.

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When figure-painting gets down to this, it is plain that it has abandoned its two great objects. First, it set itself to interpret the glory of the body, which was a great thing, and after that it set itself to paint all the brightness of the most brilliant wit and intelligence, and all the sweet sympathy of the tenderest hearts. We may rebel against Classicism for its intolerance and for its pride, but we cannot forget the height of its ideal, and its superiority to vulgar interests. We may admit that the painters of intelligence failed often on the side of art, but we can never forget their lively humor and their genial interpretation of literature. But when painters turn from the serious study of the naked figure, the only possible foundation for great figure-painting, and no longer care to paint any character worth commemorating, but give their lives to the illustration of beings whose bodies are hidden beneath great skirts and trains of velvet, and whose minds are so imperceptible that they might as well be non-existent, figure-painting becomes nothing more than an assemblage of pretty things. Infinite cleverness may still be lavished upon it; infinite labor and time may be given to the elaboration of the costly portraiture of expensive life; but the art is degraded by its preference of mere furniture to men and women. Jesus asked whether the body was not more than raiment, and these painters answer practically that it is *not*. As to the soul, they leave that out altogether.

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A typical instance of a picture of this class was M. Marchal's "Phryne," in the Exhibition of 1868. The picture was one of a pair, the other being "Penelope;" but this other was painted only to give the force of contrast to the first. The Phryne was simply a Parisian *lorette* of the present day, and the Penelope was a respectable married woman. The pair were sold, I believe, for twelve hundred pounds, and were amongst the most successful pictures of the year. Phryne was very richly dressed in black velvet, and was, on the whole, a type of her class; the face vaguely dissatisfied, and without one ray of intelligence, the body ill made and covered with an extravagantly voluminous dress. The body, I say, was ill made; it was also indifferently drawn; and, since the mind (though not inadequately interpreted) was evidently both stupid and ill-tempered, it was not worth interpretation. As to the Penelope, she was a commonplace lady (well dressed, of course, though simply), doing what such ladies are accustomed to call "work."

Now, if the reader will consider with me for a little while all that this Phryne is and is not, he will see what I mean by calling such art "degraded." Suppose that some true classic had had to illustrate the subject, he would have given us a severely critical study of the body, selecting the best model he could find (not such a model as this), and refining upon the natural forms. He would have clothed his Phryne

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with no material garment, but he would have clothed her with the ideal; and we should have had at least this, the best result of antique tradition, and persistent study of the life. Or suppose that some modern painter of intelligence, such, for instance, as Leslie, had illustrated this theme, he would have selected his model not for the beauty of her frame, but for that wit and intelligence which have, in some instances, made the influence of these women less degrading. In either case we should have had something human, —a body or a mind; but M. Marchal has given us only a heavy black velvet dress. All fine art, however, is the product of its age; and if this art is really a just interpretation of modern sentiment, it has a clear right to existence. The inference in that case must be that our civilization is a civilization of material luxury, not of bodily perfection or intellectual light.

There exists, however, in France, independently of the painters of modern luxury, a class of painters of domestic life, who may sometimes be easily confounded with the others, because, of course, when they paint the richer classes, they have to represent their material accompaniments. The initiated are apt to regard all domestic pictures with some suspicion, because it is only too well known amongst artists that when a painter has any difficulty in earning his living, his best chance of a return to prosperity lies in affecting appeals to the maternal instincts.

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Children, however, are so very difficult to paint that any considerable success in the domestic line of business proves something more than a knowledge of what is marketable; and if an artist manage to do this kind of work without falling into false sentiment, and without losing sight of art, he deserves, of course, just as much consideration as if he painted anything else. For example, De Jonghe's work is of a kind which suits the prevalent tastes so well that it may be painted for the market, but, whether this is so or not, it is quite sincere, and in perfect taste. There is a very charming picture of his, the "Confessional," which proves the yet higher faculty of delicate dramatic interpretation. Two young ladies are waiting near the confessional till their turn comes, and, as is usual under such circumstances, are occupying their time in prayer. The one nearest the spectator is the subject of the picture; and a sweeter type of unaffected piety does not exist in art. The only thing in literature which equals it, on its own ground, is a stanza in that simplest and tenderest of French songs, "Celle que mon cœur sut aimer," the young lady in that instance being a Protestant: —

"Au temple pour les malheureux,
  Et pour sa mère chérie,
Toujours quand elle prie
  Les pleurs mouillent ses yeux:
Il n'est pas de prière
Plus pure sur la terre
  Ni même dans les cieux."

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A subject of quite a different order, "Dressing for the Ball," is given in this volume. This picture owes its great charm to the nice little girl who is just going to be dressed. The slight elevation of the right eyebrow, so precisely accurate under the circumstances, and so difficult to paint quite rightly, is of itself enough to prove great powers of observation. The reader will probably agree with me in appreciating the good taste shown in the painting of the little girl's mother, who is a very ladylike person indeed. There is taste, too, in the pretty *salon* where the little scene is placed; and yet the furniture has not occupied too much of the artist's attention, nor does it intrude upon ours. The secret of that perfect avoidance of vulgarity which marks Gustave de Jonghe's work is a very valuable one to artists, because it enables them to treat the most popular subjects without in the least endangering their own dignity or the dignity of art. Very many painters attempt little scenes of this kind, and fall into the bathos of *bourgeois* sentiment and Philistinism, — the very conditions of intellect and feeling that are most hostile and dangerous to fine art. That De Jonghe should have been able to illustrate the sentiments of piety* and philo-progenitiveness

* There is not space to investigate the matter here; but it is a fact that almost all art which is devoted directly to piety or domestic sentiment is, *as art*, execrably vulgar and bad. I believe the reason to be that whenever art aims at something outside of itself it comes to nothing. Scientific art is just as bad as religious art. Of course there has been plenty of so-called

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DRESSING FOR THE BALL.

De Longhe.

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without incurring the least taint of *bourgeois* vulgarity is the strongest possible proof of his true artistic refinement and delicate sense of what is worthy of his art. A vulgar artist, being himself a Philistine, paints *bourgeois* subjects with the insensitiveness of Philistinism; a half-refined one avoids them, dreading the least suspicion of a possible sympathy with them; but a thoroughly refined painter knows that they cannot be vulgar as coming from *him*, that by a marvellous chemistry of mind no facts in nature can pass through his brain without becoming presentable to the most fastidious.

"religious art" which is admirable; but the fact is that art was its first object and not piety, the subjects being religious merely because there was a demand for pictures of that kind.

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IV.

TIMOLÉON LOBRICHON has won some reputation during the last few years as a painter of children. He began his artistic career with graceful compositions of nude figures, — as, for instance, "Les Vapeurs du Matin," in which the morning mists were represented by nymphs floating in misty air. They were very beautifully grouped, and highly idealized in form; and the group floated idly, with a lingering indecision, yet an upward tendency, which very truly and poetically interpreted the natural fact. But pictures of that kind, though they admit of the most thoroughly artistic treatment, and naturally develop whatever poetical feeling the artist may happen to possess, are not commercially a good investment of his time; and Lobrichon has long since abandoned them for the more lucrative study of contemporary childhood. He has acquired, by practice, a clear and simple method of painting, and seems to have a true liking for his subjects and to understand children well. Another subject of childhood given in this volume, "La Mendiante," is by M. Charles Brun, who was formerly a pupil of Picot and Cabanel. My knowledge of M. Brun's pictures is not sufficiently exten-

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ONCE UPON A TIME.

Lobrichon.

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sive to permit me to venture on the expression of any general opinion. The one given here was exhibited in the Salon of 1868, and proved much observation and considerable power of rendering expression; but the picture, though carefully and truly painted, is a very painful one, and it may be doubted whether the power of representing a subject of this kind in a highly finished picture is quite compatible with very delicate sympathies. The question about the treatment of painful subjects in literature and art is, however, one of the most difficult in criticism. It may be fairly argued, on the one hand, that to dwell for any length of time upon poverty and suffering in order to make artistic capital out of them is evidence that the artist does not sympathize enough with distress to feel any acute pain in the contemplation of it; but then, on the other hand, it may be argued, just as fairly, that the kind of sensitiveness which shuns the sight of all visible misery is not any evidence of mercy, but only proves the selfishness of the nerves. We all know that much distress exists in the world; if we order it out of our sight, because the idea of it is disagreeable to us, we are not the more merciful on that account. It is probable that the conduct of many of us in this respect is caused by a deficiency of imagination. We have not imagination enough to realize the misery that we do not see, and therefore we are greatly shocked when accident brings us face to face with it. When the imagination

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THE LITTLE BEGGAR-GIRL.

Brun.

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is powerful enough to realize the actuality of things not familiar to the eyes, the sight of them gives no shock of terror, and does not even surprise us. Everybody knows that there are poor little beggars in the world, and that they must often be very hungry and tired; but most of us give them a penny and forget them as quickly as possible. This particular representative of the class will find her way into drawing-rooms, — thanks to the attractiveness of art, — and may there do some service by reminding the comfortable inmates that there are existences in which comfort is unattainable.

It is better to be brought up in some charitable institution, and to get the benefit of regular discipline and useful employment, than to live on occasional alms extorted by bad performances on the fiddle. Therefore, as to subject, we may more readily sympathize with the Benedicité of Henriette Browne; the plain face, the large and simple eyes, and the exceeding simplicity of the dress and attitude, prove how far from the artist's thoughts were the ideas of beauty and of grace. Now, there is a theory, which we ought to miss no opportunity of resisting (and the present is such an opportunity), that the sole province of the art of painting is the beautiful. By its opposition to this theory, realism, in all its forms, has been driven more decidedly towards ugliness than may have been desirable, but the realists are quite right in their opposition to anything like an

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exclusive worship of the beautiful. The province of art includes all visible beauty, but it includes much more. Whatever appeals to our highest and best feelings, is legitimate material for a painter, and Henriette Browne has already, on several occasions, enlisted our warm sympathy by subjects from which beauty was either altogether absent, or where it was present only in the not very conspicuous form of a pleasant arrangement of light. In the present subject, simplicity is carried to its extreme even in the lighting and composition, the figure being presented exactly in front, so that the two sides of it are symmetrically exhibited, whilst both receive the light in precisely the same degree. Henriette Browne has a strong admiration for the brave Sisters of Charity, who devote themselves with so much energy to the alleviation of suffering. No one who, like the author of the present essay, has had frequent opportunities of observing them in their wonderful labors, can refuse the honor due to such genuine heroism as theirs. But there is always, unhappily, this reservation to be made, that the Sister of Charity does not work for humanity, but for the Church, which, after all, extensive as it is, does not include more than a fraction of the human race. There is, I fear, much bitter sectarian feeling in the breasts of these most brave and devoted women; * but notwithstanding this, which

* I knew a most devoted Sister of Charity in one of the hospitals of Paris, who in a moment of unguarded candor de-

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is perhaps necessary to their efficiency, they are amongst the highest types of heroic doers of good, that the world has ever produced in numbers large enough to form a regular and disciplined body, and their example will remain to the future, when others may emulate their practical service without their sectarian narrowness. Meanwhile, our artists and novelists do well to celebrate these active servants of God, and indeed, ought we not all to take off our hats to them as they pass on their mission of mercy?

Sisters of Charity remind me of St. Vincent de Paul, a name that recalls one of the best pictures of Bonnat, which celebrates a very fine action of that most excellent man. One day he visited some convicts, laboring hard with cannon-balls chained to their ankles, and, observing that one of them seemed exhausted by fatigue, inquired whether a substitute would be accepted. On being answered in the affirmative, the saint immediately offered himself, and was

clared that, as for Protestants, she had no pity for *them*, and that when they went to hell nobody need be sorry for them. In another town a young friend of mine was ill of typhoid fever (of which he died), and his mother was most anxious to secure the services of two Sisters of Charity as nurses, but as the boy had been bred a Protestant the Sisters were all engaged elsewhere, and could not possibly be spared. On this the mother, who was herself a Catholic, had her boy baptized as a Catholic, and then it was immediately discovered that two Sisters *could* be spared, and they came to the house, and remained with the boy till he died, and did all they could to save him.

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… to save Life.

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SAYING GRACE.

Mme. Henriette Browne.

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chained, and worked that the wearied convict might get rest. Surely there are few deeds on record more worthy of pictorial commemoration!

Bonnat is one of the strongest of the younger Frenchmen. His art is frankly based on the Spanish masters, and is open to the objections of some violence in anatomical definition, and too great blackness in shadows. Yet there is more moderation in his smaller pictures in both these respects; and such works as the "Neapolitan Peasants before the Farnese Palace, Rome," or the "Pilgrims at the Feet of the Statue of Saint Peter," are more remarkable for delicacy in method than for any obtrusiveness of force. I have a great respect for Bonnat, and great hopes for him. He is already more than an aspirant, he is a master; and if life and health be spared to him, his future is one of assured success.

The notice of Bouguereau in "Contemporary French Painters" was so brief that I am anxious to add a paragraph about him here. His manner of painting, so exquisite as to surface and so perfectly accomplished in method, is not so highly esteemed by artists as it is likely to be by the general public. This is a kind of perfection which artists usually regard with distrust, because it seems to aim at finish for its own sake, and not for the sake of the fact or the thought illustrated. There is not, however, a painter living who is more accomplished in his own way; and Bouguereau has not only much true feeling,

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but often gives evidence of truly artistic taste. As an instance of feeling may be mentioned his picture of a sick child feebly holding a taper before a little altar extemporized in the narrow bed-chamber, the mother earnestly praying for her recovery. The sentiment here is not less pure and admirable than that of the more generally known picture by Henriette Browne, where a poor little sick boy is tended by Sisters of Charity. There was in the Salon of 1868 a picture of "Sleeping Children," which was very charming, notwithstanding a *tour de force* of imitative effect in transmitted light, too obviously an appeal to popular wonder. In the same exhibition Bouguereau had a "Pastoral," with nude or semi-nude figures in open landscape, arranged with fine taste, and painted with a kind and degree of finish only too remarkable.

A finish equal in degree, though rather different in kind, distinguishes the works of Jalabert, especially his portraits. The practical work of such a painter as Jalabert depends greatly on the use of the razor. First, the dead color is laid of about equal thickness throughout, and then scraped down with a very sharp razor till it presents a perfectly smooth and even surface everywhere. On this surface, slightly oiled, the artist proceeds to work, this time in thinner color; and after successive scrapings and repaintings the picture arrives finally at a sort of finish remarkable for an extreme equality of surface, which has always a certain charm for the popular mind. And the

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A MAIDEN OF THE ABRUZZI.

Jutabert.

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popular mind is right to some extent; for, although roughness of loading would not signify in the least if the picture were always to be seen by a light equally diffused over the whole of its area, it is true, nevertheless, that, since pictures are always seen by a light either coming from above or from one side, many of the rough projections of paint will catch lights and project shadows of their own quite independently of the light and shade of the picture, and often altogether destructive to it. Horace Vernet said, and truly, that light resides in the quality of the tone, and not in the thickness of the pigment; and the love for smoothness of surface which marks Jalabert and some others is perfectly compatible with artistic power, both in color and chiaroscuro, whilst it is more than "compatible" with drawing, being positively favorable to form. Of Jalabert's works, I like his portraits best, and the single figures which resemble portraits, and are, in fact, portraits of models, more or less idealized. It so often happens in France that when a lady allows her portrait to be exhibited in the Salon she prefers to remain herself anonymous, that there is a difficulty about remembering the picture. For instance, I clearly remember Cabanel's portrait of the Countess of Clermont Tonnerre, exhibited in the Salon of 1863, but I cannot call to mind that of Madame L——, exhibited by Jalabert in this present year, 1868. The figure of a little Italian girl, "Maria Abruzzese," given in this volume, is a favorable speci-

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men of Jalabert; and, so far as the photograph can render his manner of work, the reader may judge from the delicate painting of the face of the sort of execution the artist gives to a portrait.

A painter just as accomplished as either Bouguereau or Jalabert, and therefore, in his way, a perfect master of his craft, is Compte Calix. He essentially belongs to the class of "Peintres Galants," but does not go quite so far as his predecessors in that kind of subject; and the most culpable action of which his heroines may be justly accused is, that they sometimes allow themselves to be kissed, or take too curious an interest in that amusement when practised by others. Still, we may be permitted to observe that we have no very absolute confidence in these handsome and sportive damsels who flutter about under the most rich and graceful foliage in a state of perpetual excitement; and we have always an idea that their parents must be anxious to get them married and settled. The picture in this book is not exactly of that class: the attitude of the young man is earnest enough, and the expression of the girl serious enough, to entitle them to our respectful sympathy in the difficulties of their present position. If she did not love him, she would not leave him her hand in that way; and if all were quite smooth before them, she would not look so grave.

Compte Calix paints very freely and lightly, with a luminous quality of touch seldom found in any but

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PARTING.

Compte Calix.

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the most accomplished artists. He is far beyond that tightness of manner and hardness of outline which most young painters have to contend against, and which many older ones do not entirely overcome. His composition is often uncommonly graceful, especially when his backgrounds consist of wooded landscape, and he has an acute perception of the wealth of magnificent foliage. The world he most enjoys is a sort of modern Paradise about some rich man's house, where handsome and well-dressed young women disport under very well-developed trees. Indeed, the world of Compte Calix is a prosperous, well-developed world altogether, — a place for people who are very healthy and very merry, and where the trees themselves enjoy long and peaceful summers, and round themselves into great orbs of innumerable leaves.

The already numerous attempts made by Gustave Doré to acquire the reputation of a painter, and especially the exhibition of his pictures at the Egyptian Hall, make some mention of him excusable here, though his reputation is chiefly founded upon his woodcuts. It is a misfortune inseparable from criticism that if a critic writes very favorably about some artist, although he hedges round his praise with the strictest limitations and reserves, it is believed by the public that his opinion is wholly favorable; and in this way it has been said that I admire Doré, which is very true; but the rumor

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could not burden itself with certain reservations which I have always made when writing about him, and which are now, perhaps, more than ever necessary. Gustave Doré is a man of most extraordinary endowment; no artist except Dietrich ever had stronger assimilative power, and besides his immense borrowings from others, he has a great fund of purely original resource. His productiveness has been, as we all know, unexampled and prodigious; his fecundity, in the sense of giving forth fresh ideas, has of course been considerably less so. The same artistic conception is often repeated by him twenty or thirty times under different forms and with different names; and when the critics found this out, they set up a cry that Doré was not really productive, though he seemed so, and a reaction set in against him. But he has as many ideas as most artists have, more than Meissonier, more than Gérôme, many more than some other popular favorites. He has injured himself by working too much in order to make a fortune, and some thousands of his later designs contain little that is new to us. When an artist or a writer produces too fast, he brings on a certain kind of exhaustion very peculiar in its effects, and which would not be an injury to any routine business, an exhaustion which is not the least hindrance to work, but only to the quality of the work. A writer exhausted in this sense goes on writing articles every week with perfect facility; the phrases come quite

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easily, and arrange themselves in the neatest and most workmanlike manner, but no fresh ideas are generated. So, in art, a painter or designer can go on covering canvases or wood-blocks long after his mind has ceased to produce new artistic conceptions; and much of Doré's recent work has been done in this peculiar state of exhaustion. When authors and artists feel this coming on, or awake to the knowledge that they are already in this unfortunate condition, there is only one resource for them, — a change of occupation, or a change of subject which amounts to the same thing. Now, Doré has always had an ambition to be a painter, and has rented for years two large studios in Paris, which are crowded with canvases; and although his work in oil has never been much liked by the public, he has found in the doing of it a refreshment after his exhausting labors as a designer on wood. If he could succeed as a painter, it would renovate him and save him. The designer on wood has by this time fully expressed himself, and even repeated himself, the painter not yet. Whether Doré will ever be able to paint thoroughly well is very doubtful; but if, when in his youth he had just finished the remarkable picture of the "Famille du Saltimbanque," he had made painting his first object, and studied seriously, and resisted the temptation to make fame and money by book-illustration, he might have done something remarkable by this time. Painting, unfortunately, *veut son*

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homme tout entier, will have its man altogether, — all the main current of his thoughts and his ambition, all the best hours of his life. Any sacrifice less than this the Muse of Painting does not accept. A painter, of course, may design occasionally on wood, or etch a few plates, or write upon art; and we may even go farther than this, and affirm that some occupation wholly outside of art is beneficial to a painter in the refreshment and relaxation of his mind; but still the Muse will have her daily sacrifice of time, — five or six of the best hours between sunrise and sunset, year after year, from youth upwards. When the sacrifice has been less than this, the Muse looks coldly on her slave; she may grant him a half-gift, but none of her miraculous talismans.*

I am tempted to add a few observations on the course of criticism with reference to Doré. For boundless extravagance of laudation I never read anything equal to some French eulogies of him which appeared three or four years ago, and the reaction that has set in against him since is perhaps

* The best pictures of Doré that I have seen are the "Famille du Saltimbanque" and "Le Néophyte." This last picture was exhibited in the Salon of 1868, and represented a young monk seated amongst his brethren, and visibly new to his position. The conception of the subject was strikingly vivid, and the execution vigorous and frank. Many of this artist's landscapes are finely conceived, but these are never executed with sufficient delicacy to be satisfactory. Doré has a true landscape gift, and especially a sense of the sublimity of landscape very rare in France, but his landscape-painting is wanting in refinement.

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equally removed from justice. "But Doré repeats himself so!" And pray what famous artist has *not* repeated himself? Who does not know the three or four moulds in one of which a picture by Landseer is sure to be cast: the stag picture, the heather-and-kilt picture, the horse-and-gentleman picture, the intelligent-dog picture? What artist ever repeated himself more than Claude Lorrain?* Do we not all know his sun-and-temple picture, his group of trees, and his quiet afternoon? And Cuyp, too, and a host of others,—how steadily they went on year after year painting literally the same picture over and over again with the same materials, the same set of tones, and the same sentiment? But we may go still farther, and affirm that Nature, divine and inexhaustible Nature, continually repeats herself also. Almost all lake scenery, viewed from the water, is a repetition of the same composition: a projection of rock or steep stone to the right or the left, crowned with trees, and serving as *repoussoir* to a mountain in the distance. A trout stream repeats the same pic-

* We are usually very severe upon foreigners for their departures from accuracy in English names, and therefore it is perhaps time that we learned that, since Claude was not a woman, he could not take the final *e* after the adjective Lorrain. In every English book he is called Claude Lorraine, a mistake for which we are justly laughed at by the French. It is as absurd as if we were to call Gudin a *Parisienne*, or Flandrin a *Lyonnaise*. The only plausible excuse is that we may be supposed to mean Claude of Lorraine.

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tures over and over again, till the nature of the soil changes, or till it becomes a river, sleepy pool and babbling shallow succeeding each other continually under the same trees, and with shores worn into the same lines and curves. Given the geology and the climate of a region, and any artist accustomed to that formation and that climate knows precisely the sort of stream he will find there, and the three or four pictures that will be repeated along its whole course. And so it is with the backgrounds to figure pictures too. Given, the class and the locality, and you can guess pretty accurately what sort of an interior you will find; for instance, if the reader is in an English room, the probability is that the window is *à guillotine*, that there is a good deal of cast-iron about the fireplace, that there is a carpet on the floor, a very angular chimney-piece, and that there are six panels in the door. An observant traveller, if transported by some fairy from the interior of any room in France to the interior of any room in England, would know at once by a glance at one of these objects what country he had arrived in. And people are repetitions almost as much as their habitations; given, the rank, the means, the occupation, and the locality, and you can foretell, in a general way with considerable accuracy, what the subject of your speculation will think, and eat, and buy. Now, since repetition with minor variation is the law of the animate and inanimate universe, it is likely to be the

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law of artistic production also. And as a matter of fact, easy to demonstrate, we find that artists of all kinds spend their lives in the repetition of a very few original ideas; and that Gustave Doré only differs from the artists who have preceded him in this, that he had perhaps twenty ideas to start with, whereas most painters have only ten, or five, or three.*

In "Contemporary French Painters" I spoke of the English partiality to Rosa Bonheur, and of our consequent injustice to some other Continental painters of the same rank. I mentioned Otto Weber incidentally; but seeing that he is a Prussian I could not, in a book on French painters, either offer a photograph from one of his pictures, or criticise them in detail. The title of the present volume is intentionally somewhat more elastic, and permits me to speak of any artist who lives and paints in France, whether he was born in that country or elsewhere.

The first picture by Otto Weber that proved his claim to high position was exhibited in the Salon of 1866, and afterwards in Mr. Wallis's exhibition in the

* Doré is unreliable in all matters belonging to the science of art, his chiaroscuro is very generally false and wrong, and his knowledge of form is little more than elementary. But he is quite an exceptional and peculiar genius, working after his own methods, and getting as much science as he needs, at least for his usual business of book-illustration. When he works on the large scale of his pictures (always dangerously vast) this weakness becomes more evident, and his canvases, in a certain especial sense, are empty, however many figures there may be in them.

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Suffolk Street Gallery. It was entitled "La première Neige sur l'Alm (Bavière)," and represented Bavarian peasants bringing their cattle down from the mountains. The cattle and figures were admirable for perfect freedom of movement and truth of design. There is a certain point in animal-painting which is not easily passed, but which is well known to all who have practically attempted that branch of art. You may be able to paint a cow or a horse quite respectably in some very common attitude, which the animal can be induced to retain for several minutes at a time, but it does not follow that you are able to put the animal in one of those highly expressive and *living* postures which do not remain unaltered for one second. To do this you must have some memory and imagination, and a knowledge of the animal far surpassing any ordinary accuracy. All the great animal-painters have this power and continually use it, the great amount of life which all recognize in their pictures being mainly due to it. Otto Weber has it in the same degree as Troyon and the Bonheurs, and he has all the other accomplishments necessary to the production of a first-rate cattle picture; his color is delicate and agreeable, though he is not a colorist in the great and peculiar meaning of the word, and his chiaroscuro is fairly good, though he is not in any way remarkable as a master of tonality. His sense of the values of local color as lights and darks is, however, exceptional; the effect of the

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[illegible] own [illegible] and truth of [illegible] [illegible] of art. You [illegible] a horse quite [illegible] [illegible] which [illegible] [illegible] you are able to [illegible] expressive and [illegible] remain unaltered for [illegible] you must have some mem- [illegible] of the [illegible] [illegible] All the [illegible] and continually [illegible] [illegible] all recognize in [illegible] [illegible] to it. Cato W[illegible] [illegible] as Troyon and the Bon[illegible] [illegible] accomplishments [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] meaning of [illegible] [illegible] is fairly good, though he [illegible] remarkable as a matter of [illegible] [illegible] of local color as lights [illegible] [illegible] the effect of the

A HIGHLAND FERRY.

Otto Weber.

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picture above-mentioned being altogether due to it, and very powerful. His landscape is always excellent, and was shown to the greatest advantage in that picture, where the whole country, from the snows on the high mountains to the vegetation in the immediate foreground, was admirably studied and most faithfully rendered. The photograph in this volume is from a picture of Highland cattle just going to pass a ferry; and it will be seen that Otto Weber, in spite of his foreign origin, has entered as completely into the character of our glorious little Highland breed as the best of our native painters. I have seen several other pictures by the same painter, and a few etchings of his, which confirm my favorable opinion, but on the whole consider "La première Neige sur l'Alm" his most complete and masterly work.

Another very respectable cattle-painter is Jules Didier. He was a pupil of Léon Cogniet and Jules Laurens, and gained the Grand Prix de Rome for historical landscape in 1857. This is an honor, however, to which the reader need not attach much weight; and the prizes for historical landscape are now altogether suppressed. What was understood by "paysage historique" was simply an imitation of Claude or Poussin; and the less the originality of the artist and the smaller his knowledge of nature, the better his chances of success. All constituted academies and schools of art have either neglected land-

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scape-painting altogether, or else enforced the imitation of the so-called "classical" landscape-painters of the seventeenth century; but it has sometimes happened that a young French artist, whilst really possessing that knowledge of the art of landscape-painting which would have disqualified him for a prize, has prudently suppressed it, or temporarily laid it aside, in order to win a reward which offered him a long and pleasant residence in Rome. This must have been the case with Jules Didier; for it is otherwise inexplicable how so good a painter could have received an honor so dubious. His finest pictures have been the result of his residence in Italy, and the long-horned Italian cattle have made him a cattle-painter; so that the "Grand Prix de Paysage Historique" led to something beyond that effete old form of art. The "Bords du Lac Trasimène," "Labourage sur les Ruines d'Ostie," "Une Distraction dans le Pâturage, Campagne de Rome," "Pâturage entre Ostie et Castel Fusano," are amongst the best of these cattle-pictures. They are remarkable for great frankness of manner, for a perfect knowledge of the animal represented, and in point of color for an uncommonly fine management of cool grays and deep greens. I may add that Jules Didier's knowledge is by no means confined to bovine animals and landscape. His "Préparatifs de Courses en Étrurie," a picture of charioteers just ready to start for the race, included severe studies of men and horses of a qual-

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ity, in point of science, superior to the very high average of the contemporary French school.

When purely decorative painting is exhibited in the Salon or the Royal Academy along with painting that is not of that class, but allows a more frank and striking imitation of nature, it always happens that the more truly decorative the art, the less satisfactory it appears. But when these decorative compositions are seen in the positions for which they were intended, it is surprising how much they gain, and how necessary we find it to revise our previous decisions. For example, it is extremely probable that if any reader of this volume happens to be acquainted with the works of Puvis de Chavannes which have been exhibited in the Salons of 1861 and 1863, he has come to conclusions not altogether favorable; he thinks, most likely, that Puvis de Chavannes is very odd and affected, and that the dreamland he lives in is like "Les Limbes" of Casimir Delavigne: —

Comme un vain rêve du matin
Un parfum vague, un bruit lointain
C'est je ne sais quoi d'incertain
  Que cet empire
Lieux qu'à peine vient éclairer
Un jour qui, sans rien colorer
A chaque instant près d'expirer
  Jamais n'expire.

Partout cette demi-clarté
Dont la morne tranquillité
Suit un crépuscule d'été
  Ou de l'aurore

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Fait pressentir que le retour
Va poindre au céleste séjour
Quand la nuit n'est plus, quand le jour
  N'est pas encore!

Ce ciel terne, où manque un soleil,
N'est jamais bleu, jamais vermeil;
Jamais brise, dans ce sommeil
  De la nature,
N'agita d'un frémissement
La torpeur de ce lac dormant,
Dont l'eau n'a point de mouvement
  Point de murmure.

The truth is that for intensely poetical sentiment few living painters may be compared to Puvis de Chavannes. His art is a poetical abstraction. The region that he paints is not the world, but a painter's dreamland; and the figures that dwell in it are not men and women, but the phantoms of a powerful yet tranquil imagination. To enjoy works of this kind thoroughly, we must surrender ourselves to them, and live an hour in this world of strange beings, so strong, so stately, so magnificent in irresistible action, so calm in their everlasting rest.* The splendid new museum at Amiens permits this; and in its noble entrance and corridors we may enjoy an art which is thoroughly decorative, perfectly adapted to its espe-

* There is not space in the text for any special criticism of the works of Puvis de Chavannes, but it may be added here that their subjects are usually illustrations of some simple theme, such as "Work," "Rest," "War," "Peace," "Sleep,"—by means of groups of highly idealized figures the size of life, or larger, in landscape equally idealized.

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cial purpose, and which, for these very reasons, looks strange and eccentric when out of its right place. Even the borders round these compositions, broad bands of ultramarine on which are painted a massive chain of flowers, were seen to be indubitably right in their place at Amiens, however doubtful in the Champs Élysées. The dull, dead color of these paintings, that seemed faint and cold beside the varnish and glare of the *salon*, revealed at Amiens a consummate knowledge of what in French is called *coloration*, — a word less strong than *couleur*, but implying artistic purposes not less serious, nor less difficult of attainment.*

The painter known as Le Poittevin (his real name is Eugène Poidevin) was born in 1806, at Paris, and was a pupil of Hersent. He has studied both landscape and the figure, having exhibited landscapes and a picture entitled "Les Moisonneurs" so early as 1826 and 1827. He has travelled a great deal in England, in France, Holland, Belgium, Italy, etc., and has been a constant contributor to the Salons. His pictures include a variety of subjects, ranging over the three specialties of landscape, genre, and marine, including illustrations of the different countries and people

* When *couleur* is attempted, drawing necessarily becomes secondary, as in the works of Delacroix, but *coloration* is compatible with the closest attention to form, and implies rather a perfectly harmonious arrangement of tints *upon* form than the independence of *couleur*. The tinting of Gibson's "Venus" may have been *coloration*, but could not possibly be *couleur*.

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visited in his travels. Le Poittevin is an exceedingly clever painter. There is always a great deal of truth and character in his figures; and his knowledge of landscape and of the sea is equal to that possessed, as a general rule, by professed landscape and marine painters only. Many readers who do not habitually visit the Salon may remember a picture by Le Poittevin at the Universal Exhibition of 1867, lent by the emperor, and entitled "Les Bains de Mer, Plage d'Étretat." It is the custom in France for ladies and gentlemen to bathe in full costume, and together; but, though the costume satisfies the requirements of decorum, it does not quite conceal the imperfections of the figure, especially when it gets wet and clings about thin shanks and projecting corporations. No one with any sense of the ridiculous can help being amused when he recognizes fashionable people, who are usually so well helped by dress, in the simple attire of the bather; and although the ladies, with that wonderful instinct that never under any circumstances deserts them, contrive by the choice of pretty trimmings and nice belts to give a coquettish look to the combination of blouse and short, baggy trousers that constitutes their protection from profane eyes, thus turning defensive armor into a means of attack, still these naiads do occasionally fall short of the classic ideal. It is, however, a happy provision of nature that when people are not admirable they are often amusing; and Parisian ladies and gentlemen,

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LIGHTING THE BEACON LAMP.

Le Paitrevin.

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though less perfect in form than Venus and Apollo, often have the advantage of both those deities in being much more entertaining to spectators gifted with a sense of humor. M. Le Poittevin was such a spectator; and having, further, the terrible power of setting forth all that he had observed on canvas, he recorded what he had seen so vividly that merely to have looked at his picture is as good as a visit to Étretat itself. Much of this clever observation of character may be traced in the accompanying photograph (though here it is much less obvious), which is taken from a picture exhibited in the Salon of 1863, "Les Préposés à l'Entretien des Phares du Mourdyck, Souvenir de Hollande." In the Salon of 1868 his "Festival au Château" attracted attention by its generally poetical look, and by the good management of various lights. The château was seen from outside, from the river; and the contrast between the moonlight and the warm light in the windows and the variously colored lamps on the terrace was rendered with great skill, the lamps being especially brilliant.

The beautiful picture by Aubert, of which a not inadequate translation in photography serves as a frontispiece to the present volume, is given as an example of the latest phase of Classicism, merging into genre. The figures are perfectly classical in treatment, there is evidence of the closest possible attention to form, and wherever portions of the figures are left unconcealed by drapery they are drawn

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on the strict principles of classical interpretation of the nude. Still, notwithstanding an admirable chastity, this is an incident picture, and the incident or situation, however delicately rendered, is of a kind which appeals directly to sensuous feelings. So exquisite is the taste with which the artist has managed to convey his idea, that it would not be possible to express it so clearly in written words without comparativeness coarseness; an accomplished poet might do it, perhaps, but it is not safe ground for any mere writer of prose. I would ask the reader to give a few minutes to this picture, to observe the remarkable simplicity of the attitudes and the costume,—a simplicity which, in less able hands, would have amounted to awkwardness, but which here is perfectly graceful—and then to turn at once to the Tissot, the picture of petticoats and parasols.

A young lady is confessing to another young lady that she is in love with somebody. The place chosen is a convenient one for such revelations, being the margin of a quiet stream, but the costume is scarcely adapted to the place. These voluminous dresses are likely to be caught and torn in the roots of uncivilized trees, and those abundant white petticoats (which cost as much in washing as would keep a poor family), will be soiled by earth and stained by berries. I may be excused for talking about the dresses, for nothing in the picture can for one moment contend with them in importance. It is true that there are hands to

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THE CONFESSION.

Tissot.

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hold the parasols (hands being indispensable for that), and somewhere up in the left-hand corner we finally discover two faces, and then the title of the picture begins to make itself clear to us.

Now all this curious arrangement shows that we have come to a kind of art directly opposed to the spirit of Classicism. That spirit sought, above all things, simplicity; but in this picture, and in others of its class, simplicity is so far from being the aim of the artist, that he evidently has an opposite purpose in view, and arranges these entangled folds of drapery, and sets his figures in this all but impossible attitude (impossible certainly for more than three or four seconds), in order to satisfy some taste or craving in the modern mind which was wholly unknown to the classical one. A taste for *intricacy*, for *quaintness*, for *quantity*, suddenly developed itself in Romanticism, and may be found in the last of its productions (the "Capitaine Fracasse" of Théophile Gautier) just as evidently as in its earliest. Romanticism is now dead; but Modernism, in taking its place, has inherited these predilections; and as we have writers both in England and France who make a curious intricacy in language a serious artistic aim, so we have painters who seek it to the uttermost in the choice and arrangement of material. Is this an advance upon the taste of Classicism? I believe not; I believe that the love of simplicity, whenever simplicity is possible, implies altogether a higher

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condition of the intellect, a severer training, a clearer and more governing reason, a more perfect and better regulated taste. On the other hand, the love of quaintness and intricacy is associated with much that is delightful to us in the Gothic spirit; and though this picture of Tissot's (purposely given as an example of Modernism) shows what we may justly consider a needless or even dangerous excess of it, still there are other pictures by the same artist — especially one or two interiors of quaint old churches with figures at prayer — where it is quite in its right place.

The most perfect painter of historical incident in France is Pierre Charles Comte. He was born at Lyons about 1815, and studied under Robert Fleury. His art is strictly genre painting, with a strong infusion of historical interest, and therefore the "historical painters" of the old school and their admirers look upon Comte as a degraded being; and if the reader hears him superciliously spoken of as a "mauvais petit peintre," * he need not attribute the calumny to any want of excellence in Comte's work, but simply to the hatred with which a decayed and effete school of art regards its young and vigorous successor. No one has ever possessed the art of giving historical interest to a common incident in a higher degree

* I remember a conversation amongst several French artists, during which one of them, a distinguished member of the classical school, said, "Un tel meurt de faim, tandisque vous voyez de mauvais petits peintres, tels que Comte, par exemple, qui vendent leurs toiles."

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than Comte. For example, take the subject of rat-catching. Comte determines to paint a picture of rat-catching, and might easily have found a suitable subject in modern life or in some modern novel. For instance, if he reads English, there is that bit in "Orley Farm" about "a gentleman of great skill in his peculiar line of life, whose usual residence was in the metropolis. Cowcross Street, Smithfield, was the site of this professor's residence, the destruction of rats in a barrel was his profession, and his name was Carroty Bob." Instead of this, Comte goes to Barante's history of the Dukes of Burgundy and finds the following passage: "Dans la dernière année de sa vie, le roi Louis XI. affaibli par la maladie, pour remplacer la chasse qui avait été son divertissement favori, imagina de faire prendre les rats du château et de les faire battre avec de petits chiens qu'on dressait à ce gibier." The picture is only a genre picture, so far as it is an illustration of rat-catching; but it is truly an historical picture in this, that it sets before us one of the most remarkable of French sovereigns in the last year of his reign. An historical picture truly it is, a vividly historical picture; but how contrary in execution to the principles of the old historical school! For example, the severe old school had a theory that reflections, if admitted, were to be admitted only so far as was necessary for explanation, and yet this picture is altogether illuminated by reflections; and so striking is the effect

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of sunshine that it becomes rather doubtful whether, after all, the rat-catching and Louis XI. are not mere pretexts, and whether the real subject of the work is not reflected sunshine. A sunbeam from an unseen window strikes the floor and part of a panelled division that runs across the room, and the reflections from this in every direction light the whole picture. A man is bending low as he holds the dogs, and the reflection lights his red hose, thence again reverberating, till it illumines the face of a man who is leaning over the wooden partition. The man with the dogs has a comrade in the same duty, whose shadow is visibly cast upwards on the wall from the spot of sunshine. The whole room is lighted from that one bright spot. As a study of expression, the picture ranks high; the king is eager for his amusement, in a mean, rather timid, but very interested manner; the courtiers are more or less excited or disdainful, a monk very happy to see the sport, one officer of the Scotch guard rather interested, another evidently scorning the whole thing. Throughout, the painting is technically excellent, all textures and surfaces studied to the utmost. I may add that the author of an excellent paper on "Sunshine," in the "Fine Arts Quarterly Review," who preferred to remain anonymous, but who is known to be one of the best authorities on that especial subject, mentioned this picture as a rare and marvellous instance of perfect sunshine in painting. When we consider the pro-

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digious disadvantages under which a painter works when he attempts a contest with the strong light of nature, a technical triumph of this kind seems little short of the miraculous.

There is often, in Comte's pictures, a poetical or philosophical sentiment within the apparent subject. In the picture just mentioned, it is evident that the philosophical suggestion or idea is that *advancing infirmity compels us to be contented with lower pleasures.* Louis XI. had been passionately fond of the chase, but was brought down to rat-killing by the advance of disease. So in another picture the artist has illustrated, in his historical way, the profound though usually suppressed emotion with which we revisit the scenes of our early life. A simple genre painter would content himself with presenting to us any old gentleman visiting the house where he had passed his youth; but Comte, as usual, thinks over the historical personages known to him, and fixes upon Charles V. "Charles Quint, après son abdication et avant de se retirer au couvent de Saint Just, va revoir le château de Gand où il a été élevé." Here we have, then, at once an historical picture, for a great historical personage is set before us; a costume picture, for the time is an age of costume; and a philosophical and poetical picture, for it at once awakens profound emotion and reflection on the destinies of men. Hardly any of us, however smooth and uneventful the history of our lives, can revisit,

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unmoved, the place where our career began. This emotion is a better subject for pictorial than for literary treatment; it is difficult, in writing, to say much about feelings of this kind without becoming trivial or maudlin, and a slough of bathos awaits the unwary writer who ventures on them without consummate self-control. But the painter, in a work like this, may set forth some very common and threadbare subject in a novel and attractive form. Here the subject is old and familiar, — *the return of completed life to the recollections of youth.* The concrete form which gives fresh interest to it consists in the palace at Ghent and the emperor.

Another emperor, of whom, though still living, we may safely predict the permanent renown, has been fortunate in this: that amongst the multitude of portraits painted of him, two at least are of first-rate excellence. The portrait of Napoleon III., in a simple court dress, by Cabanel, gives one aspect of the imperial person which may have interest for posterity. The means used by Louis Napoleon for the attainment of his ends were dissimulation and bloodshed; but craft as consummate as his, and cruelty far more odious than his simple determination to clear away all obstacles to his ambition, have in many instances, especially in Italian princes, been perfectly compatible with the most courtly and refined manners. Louis Napoleon belongs to the most dangerous of the dangerous classes, that of learned

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and accomplished gentlemen who have no scruples about means. People who know the emperor come from their visits to Compiègne or the Tuileries conquered by the charm of his manner. The air of refinement, the courtly and polished look in the portrait by Cabanel, are quite true to one side of this remarkable character; the other half of it no painter could set before us, because it is always hidden. The most perfect portrait, however, that Cabanel ever painted, is probably that of the Countess de Clermont Tonnerre, a lady who by marriage belongs to one of the greatest old families in France, and honors it by her simple dignity. Independently of its value as a mere likeness, it has so much other value as a picture that when it was exhibited, people stopped before it, and were bewitched by it, and felt enthralled by its soft, sweet, womanly grace and perfect dignity and infinite refinement. This picture is a curious proof of how a great artist can follow a foolish custom, and yet make it wise by the way he does so. Almost every commonplace portrait has a curtain in it. This portrait, not a commonplace one, has also a curtain. But this is a *portière*, a curtain before a door, much used in French houses, and the beautiful countess was walking towards it when she paused to look at us. It is of a golden color with armorial bearings worked in it. The background is simply the gray wall of the room, with straight lines painted round the panel, of great use in the compo-

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sition. The dress is black velvet, painted carefully and well; the hands are folded and painted as carefully as the face, and no doubt just as faithfully; the violet riband round the neck is the most brilliant bit of color admitted. The face is beautiful and interesting, with dark hair and eyebrows, and an expression very intelligent and a little sad. And close to this portrait, with its dark and quiet color, close to this clothed lady of modern France, they hung in the Salon of 1863 Cabanel's dazzling Venus lying naked on the sea. She lay in full light on a soft couch of clear sea-water that heaved under her with gleams of tender azure and pale emerald, wherein her long hair half mingled, as if it were a little rippling stream of golden water losing itself in the azure deep. The form was wildly voluptuous, the utmost extremities participating in a kind of rhythmical, musical motion. The soft, sleepy eyes just opened to the light were beaming with latent passion, and there was a half-childish, half-womanly waywardness in the playful tossing of the white arms. The whole figure was colored with a dazzling delicacy.

This picture, or the "Nymphe enlevée par un Faune," may be taken as the type of a certain class of Cabanel's works, and the portrait of Madame de Clermont Tonnerre as the type of another class. There remains still a third category, represented by his "Paradise Lost," which was exhibited at the Universal Exhibition of 1867. He can paint a charming

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portrait of a beautiful woman, or a courtly picture of a gentleman; he can paint, too, a pretty nymph or Venus, in a charming and only too seductive manner; but it does not follow that he can paint Adam and Eve in the first overwhelming sense of their ruin, and God Almighty in person coming to condemn them. It is wonderful how easily painters forget that to attempt successfully certain subjects much more is necessary than skilful management of the brush, or mastery over delicate form and color. Cabanel is not Milton, and a subject which might suit Milton exactly is quite unfit for Cabanel. Few living painters may safely attempt these subjects, especially if they have passed their lives in Paris, because few believe in them as facts, in the way that Milton believed.*

The winter of 1829–30 was an especially severe one; and in a poor little garret of the Rue Mazarine two young painters lived all through it without a fire. One of them got, not easily, a commission to paint the portrait of a gendarme. The price of the portrait was thirty francs, and the gendarme came to the little garret to be painted; but the ceiling was so low that he could not stand erect, so he had to sit on one of the two chairs that the garret contained. As there

* It may still be a question, however, whether belief in the historical truth of a tradition or legend is necessary to the perfect artistic illustration of it. Thorwaldsen was once asked how he, who did not believe in Christianity, carved his colossal apostles. "Neither do I believe in the gods of the Greeks," was his answer, "and yet I make statues of them."

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was no easel, the other chair had to do duty for one, and the painter had to sit upon a wooden box that constituted his wardrobe. The gendarme sat till he was nearly frozen, and the painter painted till his hand was numb. The portrait was a success; and the delighted original munificently gave the painter five francs more than the price agreed upon, and commissioned him to paint his wife.

Some years later the same painter made another portrait, also of a man in uniform; but this one, instead of the yellow *baudrier* of the gendarme, wore the grand cordon of the Legion of Honor, and was, in fact, the sovereign of the order and heir of the emperor who founded it. It is probable that this time the model was comfortably warm, and that the artist had an easel, — the model certainly stood up.

Whatever may have been the qualities of the first portrait, which excited much enthusiasm at the barracks, the later one took its place at once as one of the few indisputable masterpieces of this century. In an age when portrait-painting is certainly not great as art, however prosperous it may be as a trade or profession, there have been a few notable portraits, and not one more notable than this. As a likeness, it went far beyond the point of mere imitative resemblance, and set before us the aspect of the man, — the wonderful mildness and gentleness of a nature which without being bloodthirsty shrinks from no shedding of blood, the calm exterior of the most

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accomplished dissimulator alive. A quiet gentleman, reserved, it is true, yet apparently as frank as is consistent with his dignity, willing to take part in amusing little games after dinner, entrapped lately by one of his guests into committing himself by some bad spelling, and convicted of his faults, always able to control the expression of his anger, and when the occasion is serious to postpone indefinitely his vengeance till the best opportunity comes; a military chief, who, if not great in sudden resolves on the battle-field, is unquestionably great in preparing beforehand for the wants of an army and the emergencies of a campaign; a politician, who when foiled, which he is not often, bears his reverses patiently, and bides his time, — such was the man whom Flandrin had to paint. And the painter came to his task in the full maturity of his powers, a master of his art, of all the various accomplishments which go to form a painter, and which have to be acquired separately or successively, working now together in harmonious synthesis. I greatly regret that the limits of this essay do not permit me to speak of Flandrin as a religious painter.* Of his portraits, the finest, after

* Readers who are not acquainted with the religious works of Flandrin ought to visit the old and curious, and now splendid church of St. Germain-des-Près, which is full of his mural paintings, both in the choir and nave. In the nave of St. Vincent de Paul there is also a splendid frieze by Flandrin. At Nismes the traveller will find the church of St. Paul, decorated by Flandrin, and at Lyons the church of St. Martin

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that of the emperor, is the portrait of Prince Napoleon, a thoroughly characteristic picture. Others, of Count Walewski and MM. Marcotte Genlis and Rothschild, were exhibited only in the artist's studio, where they were seen by many visitors, and excited great enthusiasm.

One of the most recent of French art reputations is that of Gustave Moreau, an artist who, being at the same time laudably ambitious and of independent fortune, has devoted himself to high aims, and succeeded in producing two or three pictures of first-rate excellence in their way. His art is based more upon the study of such masters as Mantegna than any more recent ones; and no picture leaves his hands that is not long meditated and brought to the highest executive perfection attainable by the master. There are two kinds of art, which in this matter of production stand at the two ends of the scale: we have artists who try for the power of rapid and comprehensive work, which by happy selection and emphasis may be completed whilst the impression is still vivid, and this kind of art (of which the great etchers are always accomplished masters) has the quality of

d'Ainay, also decorated by him. Flandrin was a religious man, and took the greatest delight in labors of this kind. No painting is more magnificent than his, as decoration; it is as decorative as Byzantine work, and more learned. For further information on this subject the reader is referred to the first and second numbers of the new series of the "Fine Arts Quarterly Review."

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freshness for its principal aim, and succeeds or fails in proportion to the vigor and precision of its first hit; and there are also artists who naturally elaborate their conceptions very slowly, laboriously purifying and refining them, till after months or even years of meditation and study the finished picture has been completed, as oysters make pearls. Moreau belongs to the latter class, and is a very worthy example of the kind of devotion to art which such labors demand. His "Œdipus and the Sphinx," "Young Man and Death," and "Orpheus" are all, in their own peculiar way, highly wrought and deeply meditated works of art. This is an instance of that complete disdain of popular applause which all artists who can afford it ought to cherish as their best safeguard. Though working on principles very different from those of Courbet, Moreau is equally sincere, and more purely artistic in his aspirations.

One of Flandrin's pupils, Blaise Desgoffe, has this claim to attention, that he is the most skilful imitator of near objects now alive in the world. Of course, such art as his does not admit of invention, and the highest artistic qualities, except the sense of color, are almost uncalled for here; but there is a notable difference between Desgoffe's choice of subject and that of vulgar painters of still life. Instead of imitating twopenny beer-bottles, he copies fine vases of crystal and rare old enamels; instead of representing kitchen utensils, he reproduces the most precious

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ivories and agates in the Louvre. His art is therefore noble in its way, being the best use of a sort of talent hitherto often thrown away upon work unworthy of it. Desgoffe's pictures are precious copies of precious things. As to their finish, it goes even beyond our most perfect pre-Raphaelite work. As in all first-rate painting, there is no parade of detail, and a careless spectator might easily pass these pictures without suspecting that there was any extraordinary amount of it in them; but after studying them for half an hour, one's astonishment grows and grows. Every vein in every agate is studied to the finest of its curves, every surface imitated to the most accurate expression of the exact degree of its convexity, every reflection painted in its full detail. Take a single instance: the principal object in one of his pictures is a splendid vase of rock-crystal, of the fourteenth century; on several of its facets is the reflection of an unseen window. Landseer would have represented those with spots of pure white, Millais with spots of pale gray, with a touch of white for the highest light, the largest of them shaped to a rough expression of the window reflected, the others without form. But Desgoffe *paints* every one of them thoroughly, the panes of glass in the window being quite perfectly reflected in the curving surface of the crystal over and over again, with all the modifications resulting from change of place. There is not the slightest attempt in any part of these works to substitute clever

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manipulation for fair study and imitation. Without anything of what painters call texture in the paint itself, which is perfectly smooth, there is a representation of texture in the objects, obtained, as in photography, by fair finish; * so that all substances — crystal, enamel, agate, ivory, embroidery, metal, and wood — seem simply real. Even Holland herself never produced so marvellous an imitator.

* For example, most painters, in painting a rough-cast wall, would plaster the canvas with rough paint; photography would get the texture of it by giving every minute projection with the light on it and the shadow cast by it. And that is the way Desgoffe imitates embroidery.

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AS it is necessary to reserve a page or two for landscape, my notice of some figure-painters not yet mentioned in these essays must be briefer than I could have wished. There is Landelle, for instance, who deserves a longer notice than this simple statement that he is one of the most accomplished painters of the school; but I count upon the excellent photograph from his "Femme Fellah" to do him better justice than may be done in a paragraph like this. Three other Oriental pictures by him were exhibited in the Universal Exhibition of 1867, proving equal skill and more vivacity.* Boichard is one of the most surprisingly skilful of the painters of modern life; such works as his "Gold Fish" and "Game of Jonchets" are quite remarkable for imitative excellence,—the screen in the latter picture, a Japanese design in gold upon a black ground, was one of the marvels of the Salon of 1868, the gilding on the screen, though close to the real gilding of the

* 1. "Enfant d'Aïsaouï, charmeur de serpents (Tanger)"; 2. "Prison de Tanger—le Pain"; 3. "Prison de Tanger—l'Eau."

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FELLAH WOMAN.

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FELLAH WOMAN.

Landelle.

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frame of the picture, was perfectly deceptive, though not a particle of gold-leaf was used, and it was all pure painting of metallic lustre and reflection. In the picture of "Gold Fish," which was exhibited in England, a lady and child were in a handsome Parisian room, watching some gold fish. Nothing could be more exquisite than the painting of everything in the elegant little salon.

It would have been no more than fair, too, to give a full page to Janet-Lange, a pupil of Horace Vernet, who has painted several touching pictures of military life. Two of the most affecting were exhibited in the Salon of 1866, "Allant à l'Ambulance" and "Le Dernier Ami." The second of these will be at once understood from the accompanying photograph, and needs no comment. In the first an officer has dismounted and is leading his horse, on which he has placed two wounded men; a third, who is able to walk, but has been blinded by a wound and has a bandage over his eyes as well as one arm in a sling, is holding by the remaining hand to the mane of the horse for guidance. The weather is very wet and miserable, and we see sufferers dimly through the rain. The picture is touching in many ways, — the scene is so dreary, the soldiers so patient; and then the kindness of the officer pleases us.

Amongst other sins of omission in these essays, has been the considerable name of Plassan, a true artist, uncommonly refined in method, though his

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subjects are not always very interesting. He is, however, sufficiently well known in England to need no recommendation here. Duverger, too, is beginning to be known in England, where his reputation as a highly skilful and observant painter of genre is likely to prosper and increase. I like his cottage interiors best; they are admirably painted, and the figures are full of character. Two of the most perfect pictures of this class, his "Repentant Daughter" and "Sick Child," have been exhibited in London.

In the selection of illustrations for books of this kind, genre is sure to predominate, to the all but total exclusion of the severest figure-painting and landscape. I said in the beginning of this essay that in a certain sense the public painted the works of its favorite artists; and in the same sense, it is the public that selects illustrations for books of this kind. The cultivated reader will easily understand how much I regret that there is not one serious study of the nude, and that there are only two studies of landscape, in all the thirty photographs that accompany these Essays on French Art. The only art that is thoroughly popular is genre; and genre is not popular for its artistic interest, but for its human interest. But of genre enough has been said, and more than enough photographed, and surely we may be permitted to give two pages of print and one photograph to the great French school of landscape.

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THE LAST FRIEND.

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THE LAST FRIEND.

Janet Lange.

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A great school it is, assuredly, so far as the temper of it may constitute greatness. It is not so great in the range of its achievement, hitherto very limited; but when the right artistic temper exists in any school, it is always likely to extend its efforts in time, and to increase its range. The French landscape-painters have not hitherto studied mountains seriously; and this implies that they have not studied the more remarkable phenomena of the sky, which are only to be seen amongst mountains. But they have based the studies of the school upon the picturesque scenery of France; and France, though despised by tourists, is exceedingly rich in artistic material and suggestion. Her rivers are inexhaustible, and her ancient cities, though greatly impoverished (from the artistic point of view) by the advance of modern improvement, are still true ornaments of nature, as man's works ought to be, not eye-sores as they too often are. But the broad rivers and towered cities are familiar to the English tourist; the districts not familiar to him, such, for instance, as the Morvan, with its hundred little valleys and innumerable streams and picturesque villages and castles and rocks and boundless forests, are every year more and more explored by the French landscape-painter.

What seems admirable in the spirit of the best French landscape-painters is their absence of pretension, and also their simplicity of purpose. They aim at a purely artistic impression, without troubling

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themselves in any way about scientific delineation, or the interest of the subject, as a natural curiosity or phenomenon. In this respect they are nearer to the high artistic spirit than any other contemporary *school* of landscape, though there are individual painters in other schools who have this spirit also. The best artistic motives are nearly always destitute of interest for minds not artistically cultivated; and the natural marvels or curiosities which the *bourgeois* travels far to see are likely, in the majority of instances, to be less suggestive to a true painter than some combination of very common material that he discovers for himself, and which, assuredly, no other human being could discover for him. I remember a tourist who, being asked whether he admired a certain very lovely valley in England, answered contemptuously that he had seen Switzerland. Now the spirit which dictated this reply was the very opposite of the spirit which lives in the French landscape-painters. Many of them have also "seen Switzerland;" but Switzerland does not annihilate their artistic faculties, does not incapacitate them for the appreciation of grandeur and beauty in humbler scenery; and it may be observed that when the artistic faculties are so weak that there is any danger of this, they ought not to be exposed to the risk of it.

French landscape-painting is so essentially synthetic, aims so much at perfect unity of impression, that it fails often in detail, and seems careless or

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STUDY OF TREES.

Corot.

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ignorant in design. But on this point there exist differences of opinion. When a true artist finds that he cannot give really good form without injuring his effect, he is quite frank about it, and gives form that has no pretensions to be good. He can do this if his public is highly educated; but if the public is half educated, he must put specious form into his picture to please it, and deceive it into the belief that there is real drawing in the work. You cannot deceive a true critic in this way, and it is of no use trying; but, on the other hand, the true critic does not wish you to take the trouble, being perfectly satisfied with such an amount of form as, in your case, may be compatible with your other qualities. Now, Daubigny has little form, and Corot has still less; but they both of them draw quite as well as many an English landscape-painter who is never accused of being ignorant of drawing. I do not choose to mention names, but for thorough ignorance of landscape form some of our popular English landscape-painters may contend with those of France, or of any other country. On the other hand, one or two of our best men (David Cox, for instance) are just as frank in the absence of pretension to form as those honest men across the Channel.

I have not space here for any adequate analysis of the work of individual landscape-painters, and dare not commit myself to any brief criticism, because it is not possible, in a few words, to express opinions

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that are necessarily complicated by all sorts of artistic considerations. It is the misfortune of all writing upon art that in this kind of literature brevity is neither compatible with truth nor with the pleasure of the reader. Before an opinion about any artist can be valuable, it must be hedged round with many reserves; and for so thorough an analysis to be readable, additional space must be allowed for the mere craft of authorship, space for transition and illustration, and room for each paragraph to come happily to its natural close.

In the course of this volume I have said little in favor of the influence exercised by popular opinion upon art, and by popular interest in it. This influence is, no doubt, in a great degree injurious; but something remains to be said on the other side with which this essay may conclude.

The public is more interested in art than formerly, or at least more willing to seek amusement in it. An art which is generally interesting, like a literature which has something for all classes of readers, is continually educating its admirers, and preparing them for better things; but an art and a literature addressed only to the few would train no recruits, and would benefit only the instructed, producing outside of their little circle no better result than a hollow pretence of connoisseurship, or a slavish superstition about "rules." Painting, no doubt, often addresses itself to an uncultivated public; but

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so does literature too, and, on the whole, with good results. The impression that modern art is frivolous may be due in some measure to the necessities of periodical publication. In literature the larger part of what is produced consists in the hasty comment of the journalist, and the loose narrative of the ordinary writer of fiction; and if all the literary productions of France had to be published annually in the "Palais de l'Industrie," as all her pictures have, how immensely the lighter and more careless kind of writing would predominate, and how difficult it would be for the critic to resist the impression of a universal frivolity, and to find out and appreciate the few literary performances which combine finished workmanship with deep or accurate thought!

THE END.

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